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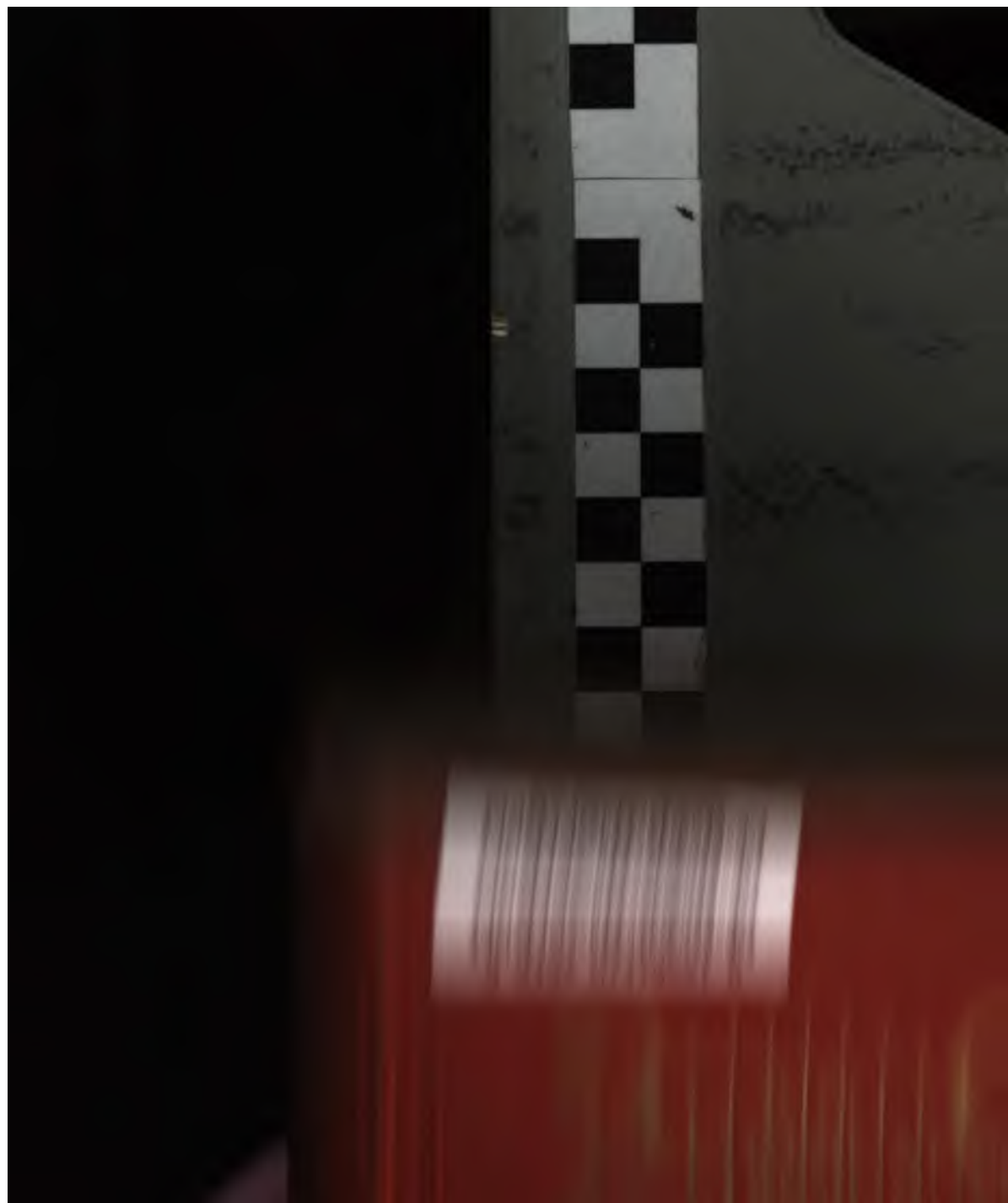
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1 Fiction (American)  
2. Musical records



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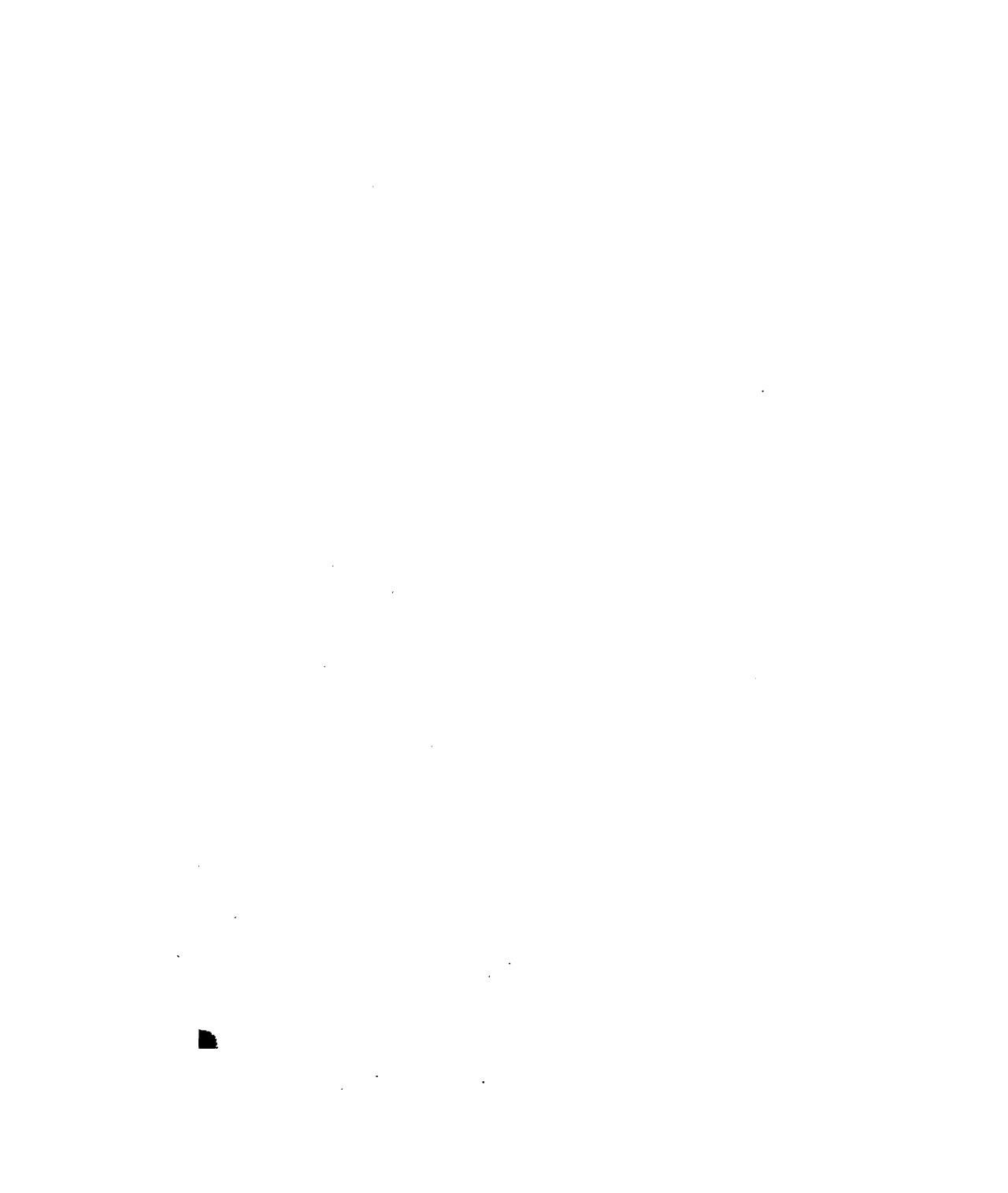
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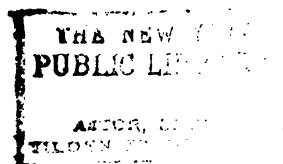




**AN AMERICAN SINGER IN PARIS**









*"SHE SAW AND KNEW THAT SHE—JULIA PEMBROKE—HAD DEVELOPED INTO  
A FORM OF STRIKING BEAUTY."*

THE  
AMERICAN SINGER  
IN PARIS

A NOVEL  
BY  
MR. HANSON F. LEBMAN

ILLUSTRATED BY  
GLEN TRACY

CINCINNATI  
THE TRIBUNE PRINTING CO  
1908.



**AN  
AMERICAN SINGER  
IN PARIS**

**A NOVEL**

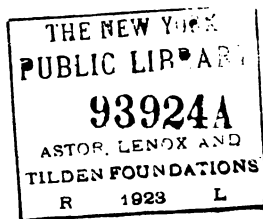
**BY  
MRS. HANSON WORKMAN**

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**ILLUSTRATED BY  
GLEN TRACY**

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## ILLUSTRATIONS

"SHE SAW AND KNEW THAT SHE—JULIA PEMBROKE—HAD  
DEVELOPED INTO A FORM OF STRIKING BEAUTY." *Frontispiece*

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ABLE INTRODUCTION TO YOU—TO YOU—THE ONLY WOMAN  
I HAVE EVER LOVED." . . . . . 106

"MON DIEU! JULIA IS DEAD!" . . . . . 274





TO  
THE GREAT SINGERS OF THE WORLD,  
WHOSE CHARACTERS AND VOICES  
HAVE ENNOBLED LIFE AND ILLUMINATED HISTORY,  
THIS BOOK IS RESPECTFULLY DEDICATED.

1923

MAY

TRANSFER FROM C. D.



I asked the Sun.  
"Canst tell me what love is?"  
He answered only by a smile  
Of golden light.

I prayed the flowers.  
"Oh tell me, what is love?"  
Only a fragrant sigh was wafted  
Thro' the night.

"Is love the soul's true life,  
Or is it but the sport  
Of idle summer hours?" I asked  
Of Heaven above.

In answer, God sent thee,  
Sweet heart, to me!  
And I no longer question.  
"What is love?"

—*The Galaxy.*

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# An American Singer in Paris.

## CHAPTER I.

"You sing *Lucia* very well, and should you go out from my school now, you would be the equal of any of the great artists of the day. But, my pupil, if you will continue to study with me one year longer, and study as earnestly and as successfully as you have during the years since Madame Cinati placed you under my guidance, I promise you that I shall—no, that I will—present you to the music-loving people, the greatest singer the world has ever had."

He paused, and, looking at the open score of "*Lucia*" upon the piano before him, awaited her reply.

Julia, stepping down from the rostrum, came close to the master's side. He did not turn toward her, but continued to look at the music, while his fingers wandered in silence over the keys.

Julia, whose face during the singing of *Lucia* had given evidence of rapturous delight at making her début the following month, hesitated to make answer, for she felt unable to hide the tremor of disappointment which she was certain her voice must betray were she to attempt a reply at once.

Finally, having overcome the bitter emotion which the master's words had precipitated upon her, she said, calmly: "I shall study another year, since you desire it and think it best that I should do so. I trust your judgment. I trust implicitly your devotion to the art of song."

"Thank you, Miss Pembroke. By your assent I shall become the teacher of the world's greatest singer."

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Then rising from his seat at the piano, he bowed profoundly to Julia, at the same time saying: "Thus the world will greet you. This I feel; this I know."

"My good teacher," said Julia, "I shall endeavor, by every means within my power, to make you realize your fond anticipation."

The master, grasping her by the hand, shook it heartily, saying: "Thank you, thank you, thrice I thank you." Then seating himself, he said: "Let us continue the lesson—the cadenza, Julia," and he struck, as a preliminary, the chord which ends the aria.

Soft, but surely, came the sad, forsaken melody which speaks so truly of the unhappy state of the despairing *Lucia*. Though the short phrases, at the beginning, sighed gently, each note by Julia's now perfectly placed and beautifully developed voice was clear, vibrant, penetrating and strong.

As most singers do, in the execution of florid passages, Julia had gradually increased the tempo, until, as she bounded from trills to gruppettos, now repeatedly up and down the scales, in runs, triplets, and in arpeggios, poising at the heights of these roulades, to execute the successive staccatos, on and on, with reckless brilliancy, over all the time-honored ornaments known to the lyric art, the marvelous flexibility of the fresh, young voice was bewildering, captivating and almost bewitching, well displaying the years of diligent practice which she had pursued.

And when the prolonged trill, delicate at first, but quickly increasing in a superb crescendo to the zenith of her power, burst forth, the effect was crowning.

Every tone throughout this race of note participants was exquisitely true and polished; every tone was as limpid as a raindrop, and, like it, had gathered from its sun—the human soul—that brilliancy which makes a

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raindrop a lighted crystal, and makes each note as lovely as a flawless moonlit gem, through whose effulgent light a soul is seen.

The manner in which she mounted to the dizzying heights of this difficult cadenza, taking the sustained F in alt with such ease, accuracy of intonation and golden purity of tone, would readily confirm the minds of each and all auditors that such possibilities are attainable by the born singer only; and, further, that the possessor of such combined vocal gifts is produced only once in a century.

She sang on and on—sang as only one can sing when faith is the guiding star; for Julia had that high faith which fails not by the way—faith in her teacher, faith in herself, but, most of all, faith in her mission.

The mission of each life on earth is well nigh impossible to discern, or divine, but such is not the case with the general vocations of men and women in society, for each has a clear, defined, general purpose in life. The function of the soldier, the statesman, the lawyer, is to restrain the wrong; the work of the educator, the scholar, the writer, the clergy, the editor, is to expand the good; while the high purpose of the poet, the artist and the singer is to beautify the good.

Julia entered upon and pursued those long years of arduous study with firm resolve to attain the high purpose set by the ages of men for the divine art of song.

As Julia left the maestro's house, on the Parc de Monceau, and walked quickly down the Rue Rembrandt, the evening shadows were seen creeping into the most secluded corners of the streets and boulevards.

She could not help suffering a decided change of spirit, for on entering a short time before she had been swayed by a buoyant enthusiasm, so strong had been the



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emotion occasioned by the assurance that the years of severe study were about to be crowned with a successful début.

Now all was changed, and another year's continuous study must intervene between the present and the cherished hour of début. She reasoned with herself that, no doubt, the master understood, and she would abide by her decision; yet she could not overcome the feeling of depression which seemed to cover her and to press upon her from all sides, and with appalling force.

Deeply moved by thoughts of this nature, her arm twitched nervously, and ended in a spasmodic jerk, which sent a piece of music out of her music-roll, carried in that hand, for it lay in the center of the rolled-up score of "Lucia di Lammermoor," which she had in her roll. It fell, unnoticed by her.

Just at this instant she was passed by a carefully dressed young man, going in the opposite direction. To her he passed not, for she was too much preoccupied.

"Pardon, Mademoiselle," said a voice; "I think this piece of music dropped from your music-roll."

"Ah, indeed!" exclaimed Julia, without lifting her eyes above the hand in which he held the music. "Yes, it is mine," for she had seen her name upon the corner uppermost. "Thank you, very much indeed, sir." And she continued on her way.

Though she had reclaimed her music, without looking at the stranger, the opposite was true of the stranger, for he saw and admired the fine, strong face of the young woman whom he had just addressed.

## CHAPTER II.

On finding herself within the privacy of her apartment, Julia sat down, weary in body and mind. She tried to recover her usual spirit of cheerfulness, but her disappointment was bitter, and this emotion, when allowed to prey upon a victim, undoubtedly entails suffering to the limit of one's endurance.

Julia understood this, and so quickly put herself to other affairs in an effort to keep her mind in a healthy channel, and for this purpose she knew of no better method than that of directing her attention to the little affairs which require careful supervision.

One number of her daily programme was the studious reading of some English or American poet, and for this purpose selections were made from volumes of Shakespeare, Shelley, Bryant, Longfellow and others, all of which were found upon her library shelves.

At this moment the volume of Longfellow lay upon the table, beside which Julia had seated herself. She reached for the volume, then let it drop idly in her lap.

"No," she said, "it is better not to read an American to-day. I might become homesick." But again she took up the book, which had opened when it had fallen from her hand. It would seem that the poet wished to help her, for when Julia put down her hand to replace the rejected volume upon the table from which, a few minutes earlier, she had taken it, her eyes, following the motion of the hand, fell upon the open page, whereon she saw the title of that nobly inspiring poem of the "People's Poet"—Henry Wadsworth Longfellow—that poem fitted to all, not to suit all alike, nevertheless to suit all making

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the journey, on up to the end for which the great First Cause destined each life.

Though in years far back in America she had committed the poem entire, she let her eyes run through "The Psalm of Life" until she came to the lines:

"On the world's broad field of battle,  
In the bivouac of Life,  
Be not like dumb, driven cattle!  
Be a hero in the strife!

"Let us, then, be up and doing,  
With a heart for any faith;  
Still achieving, still pursuing,  
Learn to labor and to wait.

Those heaven-inspired lines had the desired effect, for no sooner had the sentiment been telegraphed within than she arose, saying: "I must cast away this spell of gloom." And with a bright step she soon stood before her mirror to arrange any little disorder which the removal of her hat might have occasioned.

It is certainly a healthy indication when one is seen looking into one's mirror for an idea of the impression one's person is giving out upon the world; and most especially is this a healthy sign if the regard is given much to the appearance of the lines chiseled daily upon the face. By carefully noting the facial lines one can easily see the ravages of impish thoughts as well as the portrayal of high and noble ideals, for the face of each person represents the exact character of that particular individual.

"Ah," thought Julia, as she caught sight of herself in her mirror, "I must go into my boudoir and arrange

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my hair," her customary beautiful coiffure being sadly awry.

She seated herself before her dressing table, and placed the mirror at the proper angle; then as soon as the comb and pins were removed, she shook out the wealth of golden tresses, which unseen hands of fairies might have been supposed to drop around her shoulders. She quickly gathered the rich threads in a large, loose coil, low down at the back of her neck, and securely fastened all with the pins; the front was parted and carried back, a large, fluffy strand on either side, to the coil at the back of the head, where above the coil she pushed in a large amber comb.

This style of coiffure was very becoming to her oval face, with its large, earnest blue eyes, above which curved the delicately traced eyebrows in a graceful arch from the nose to the end of the curve downward. The long, high nose lent great strength of character to the face; for in itself the face was almost childlike in the tender lines of the chin. The mouth was small, and, although delicately sensitive to all the sentiments, was yet possessed of a womanly firmness, and when the neatly chiseled lips parted in a smile or in speech, two rows of regular white teeth, symmetrical as a string of graduated pearls, were seen. The face in general, together with the pink and white complexion, gave evidence of the splendid health and capabilities of this fair young woman of two-and-twenty summers.

She was not like most young women of that age, delicate and slight of form, for during the past six years each day had given some added physical development, such as is required of all who would reach the heights in the world of song.

The chest was high—so high, so large, that for one of her height, which was something near five feet five

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inches, it gave the impression of abnormality, and it tapered gently down to the waist line, which, in comparison, seemed disproportionately small, but in reality was not small.

But though she had given her hair the usual care, and lingered longer than was her wont, she found herself still confronted with the drooping shoulders, with the limp appearance, with the dejected, haggard, woe-begone expression of countenance—all most truly negative of her enthusiastic character; for, though not prim in the matter of dress and general appearance, she could not be classed with the Burne-Jones style of woman, nor with any approach to it.

"No, indeed," she thought, "I dare not entertain emotions which can produce such a shadow of my real self. Truly, at this rapid decline I should not know Julia Pembroke at the end of a week."

She arose from the seat before her dressing table and took a general survey. Altogether it was a sad contrast to the firm, erect and buoyant young woman whom she had seen there on taking her last look, when leaving for the lesson with Maestro Novara.

"I am indeed ungrateful," she thought. "How bright, how beautiful, is my present life to the dark period I spent with my stepmother! Perhaps, though, she darkened my life, because she could not understand me, and I am certain that I did not understand her."

It is strange, yet true, that in the past of each life there is some period of darkness—one's great life struggle, which is remembered only with a shudder. No after struggle, be it in the strife for survival or against temptation, ever strikes the soul with the same dread poignancy.

The first seven years of Julia Pembroke's life had been years of peace and happiness, for, though motherless, the

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maternal grandmother had been more than mother to the little one left by the death of her only daughter, Cordelia Mertonby. She had welcomed little Julia into the old home, over which spread her influence, like a great white dove, with outstretched wings, sheltering, shielding and guarding the pathway and the footsteps of the infant.

It was from this grandmother that Julia had inherited her extraordinary vocal gift. Christine Upsalen, for that had been the maiden name of the grandmother, was a Norwegian, born in Stockholm, Norway. She had studied earnestly in Paris under the musical guidance of Manuel Garcia.

After five years of severest application, under this celebrated maestro, artistic judges pronounced her voice such as to make her a dangerous rival for the honors which thus far belonged to the "Swedish Nightingale" alone, since to attempt a scientific description of the voice of Christine Upsalen would be, in the words of her master, a repetition of the qualities ascribed to the voice of Jenny Lind. But on an afternoon when singing in audition given by Maestro Garcia, a titled son of English soil, who sat among the listeners, fell madly in love with the fair young singer. Afterwards they had married and had sailed for the States beyond the Atlantic, and Cincinnati, Ohio, had been chosen as the place wherein to build their home. The mother of Julia had inherited the vocal powers of Christine Upsalen. But, marrying at the age of eighteen, died sixteen months later, leaving Julia a babe some few days old.

As the florist watches for the first tender shoot of his tulip putting forth for Easter day, so watched the devoted grandmother, in joyous expectancy, for the first velvety tone which would carry to her soul the intelligence that another song spirit had come upon earth, to sing itself out upon the waiting throng eager to hear a

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heavenly message borne aloft upon waves of glorious melody; for messages such as those conveyed by the great singers of earth are inspired, and work only for the uplifting of all who receive them.

As soon as Julia was able to go out at will she spent most of her time under the apple trees, and early learned to climb up among the branches, often far out upon the limbs, vying with the birds in their carolling, and all the while telling her grandmother that she wanted to sing like a bird.

Here in the apple trees she sang with the birds every spring, and often during the rendition of one of her brilliant impromptu cadenzas, finishing with a prolonged trill, the birds would cease their song, and, perched upon the twigs and branches around her, would peer through the leaves and blossoms, as if wondering what manner of bird she was.

At six years of age she was taken to hear Adelina Patti, and from then until she was taken away by her father she gave daily concerts to her grandmother, singing so nicely the arias as sung by Patti that the devotee of Jenny Lind knelt at a new shrine, and Julia Pembroke was the goddess of that shrine.

Another happy year had flown, when Bertram Pembroke, Julia's father, returned from the gold fields of California, whither he had gone after the death of her mother. He had married again, married a widow with one child—a daughter—six months Julia's senior. Chicago had been chosen as the city for his new home, and thither Julia was taken at once. The grandmother, unable to bear the shock at separation from the idol of her dream, died a month later of a broken heart, for she refused to be comforted, and so the angels bore her away.

Mr. Pembroke, still having interests in the gold mines of California, spent many months each year in that

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state, and during his absence Julia's life was a genuine purgatory; in truth, she was made to "pass under the rod."

The rules of training constituted a daily series of criticisms of the severest order, administered in a sarcastic tone and manner such as would have crushed the child heart of the bold and daring "Black Douglas."

Years passed on, leaving nothing for Julia but a desert of sad memories, which so appalled her as at times to cause her to wonder if God ever heard the prayer she sent daily to His throne. Wider and deeper grew the breach between herself and the other members of her father's family, until she felt herself a veritable Cinderella in the family.

At the age of fifteen the world would have pronounced her a girl equally beautiful for her physical, her mental and her moral endowments; but the world knew her not, for her life was confined to a daily routine of household duties, which occupied the portion of the day not spent in the schoolroom.

Many, many pictures painted from her real life during the past nine years had been hung on Memory's wall, all of which were heavily draped in mourning. The scenes beneath those draperies she hoped ever to keep hidden from mortal eye. Not even her father had been permitted a glimpse of the struggles therein portrayed. Enough to know she had been saved only by those other pictures done in blue, white and gold, and hung far back behind those grim monsters, looming up so terrible each time she thought to go behind them; where she would lift the filmy veil with which the years had draped them, and peep in at the happy scenes, representing life with grandma. Those little pictures had soothed her to sleep on many a sad night, when life seemed a dreary waste spread out before her.



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In providing all life's comforts and many luxuries for his child, Bertram Pembroke had failed to provide her with that one most necessary to the proper growth and development of each and every child in the world—motherly love. No child thrives healthily in an atmosphere of unloving or unsympathetic criticism.

When Julia was sixteen years of age she found herself very suddenly an orphan, for in crossing the boulevard in front of their home her father was struck by a fast-flying auto and instantly killed.

One morning, some three weeks after that fatal day, she chanced to read of the presence in the city of Chicago of a great lyric prima donna. A bright thought struck her. She would go at once and seek admission to the singer.

Attired in a neat, navy blue street suit, of perfect fit and finish, with gloves and hat of same color, she passed out of the house, to make for herself the place in the economy of things which by right of birth is the privilege of every intelligent American.

On reaching the hotel where the prima donna was staying, she sent up her card. The servant soon returned with orders to conduct Miss Pembroke to the prima donna's suite of rooms.

As Julia entered the room the prima donna arose from her seat and advanced toward her, extending her hand with a very pleasant and agreeable manner, at the same time greeting her in a charmingly sweet, low, well-modulated voice: "I am very glad to have the pleasure of meeting you, Miss Pembroke. Be seated, please," she continued, at the same time signifying a seat by a motion of her left hand. In an instant her eyes had surveyed the girlish figure of her graceful, young guest.

"Thank you," replied Julia, who still remained standing; "I would not intrude long upon your precious time."

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"But I insist," said Madame Cinati, evidently much pleased with the charming, young stranger.

Julia, accepting the seat, still feeling it would be best in any case to expedite matters as soon as possible, said: "Madame Cinati, I came to ask if you will kindly hear me sing, and then tell me exactly what you think of my voice."

"That I shall be most happy to do," replied Madame Cinati, in glowing accents, "for I assure you it would give me great pleasure to be able to find you possessed of a voice. Your face indicates that you are a soprano—a very high soprano. However, that is soon decided. Will you sing some little song for me?" she went on, encouragingly.

Julia arose and sang without accompaniment the beautiful French Christmas song, "Noël," a song her father used to sing, and which she knew well. During the singing of "Noël" the prima donna's delighted smile encouraged Julia to sing it better than she had ever sung it before.

"Now, then," said the prima donna, rising and going toward the large grand piano across the room, "come to the piano, please." Then, seating herself, she struck middle C, requiring Julia to give a sustained tone on the same. This she continued to do on every note to high C, two octaves above. After the test on sustained tones she tried Julia at sight reading, but Julia could not read notes.

Closing the music, she said: "Now, let me test your ear, for to become a very fine singer one must be born with a musical ear." Then she played different, short, broken melodies, continuing to give each more difficult than the former, every one of which Julia sang without an error.

"Where did you learn to do this kind of work so per-

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fectly?" she asked, in evident amazement at the alert and accurate ear of Julia.

"I have sung in this fashion to suit my fancy, that is all. I have never studied music in any form."

"Indeed!" exclaimed Madame Cinati. "This perfection in natural singing is nothing short of the marvelous."

"Thank you," said Julia, whose face was now a study in lights, which would make radiant a summer sunset at the close of a cloudless June day.

Next she played a trill, and asked Julia if she could sing that. Julia's eyes danced with joy, for this had been the finish for all her improvised cadenzas. She took the trill which the prima donna had played for her, and, carried away by the inspiration of the moment, she continued the execution of the trill in splendid style throughout the time of a full breath.

The prima donna, astonished, sat gazing at the smiling countenance of Julia, who now stood calmly before her, awaiting the verdict of one whose judgment would have no little weight upon her future course of action.

At last the prima donna spoke. "Miss Pembroke, your singing of 'Noël,' though not a song suited to your voice, shows excellent style. Your compass is very unusual. Your musical ear is perfect and your trill is matchless. Now, if you are in earnest, you can become one of the great singers of the world; but, remember, my young friend, it is a long time before you find yourself a finished singer; besides, you have many arduous duties to perform, and, too, it will require a great deal of money, for you must study Voice Placement and Voice Development; you must study the Italian, French and German languages; you must study Solfeggio; also, a thorough course in Style and Finish. At the completion of this course you will be an excellent vocalist—a lyric soprano.

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"Then, if you wish to become one of the operatic stars, you must add to the course just mentioned Dramatic Action, Stage Department and the learning of entire operas. This, you see, is acquired only by severe and continuous application, and at extravagant expenditure of money.

"Are you willing, Miss Pembroke, to make this absolutely necessary sacrifice of your time, of your money, your enjoyments; in a word, all but the art of song?" she demanded, inquisitively.

"I shall study until I become an operatic singer," answered Julia, quietly, but decidedly.

"Are your parents willing you should pursue this course?" interrogated Madame Cinati.

"My parents are both dead, and I am alone in Chicago. I have five hundred dollars in gold, but I shall begin to study at once, and before this money is expended, no doubt, I shall be competent to teach a class of small pupils. At any rate, I shall continue to study and teach as long as necessary."

Madame Cinati, anxious to have so brilliant and serious a girl for her protégée, begged Julia not to be offended, but to accept a plan which she had to suggest.

"I shall be very happy, indeed," the prima donna began, sweetly, "if you will allow me to place you under one of the most renowned teachers of song in Europe, and give me permission to defray your entire expenses until you have completed your education, which will require at least five or six years of closest application."

Seeing a look of hesitancy on Julia's face, Madame Cinati continued, hastily: "Miss Pembroke, do not answer me now; think the matter over, then come to me to-morrow and give me your decision. If you do not follow my plan, I fear much the world may lose you. By looking with favor upon my plan I see you making

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many triumphal tours of the world, singing all the beautiful rôles allotted the lyric soprano."

Julia, who, since singing, had remained standing, approached the prima donna, and, kneeling in front of her, clasped both of Madame Cinati's hands in hers and kissed them repeatedly in a rapture of ecstatic emotion.

"Madame Cinati," she began, "I thank you very, very much, indeed, for your kindness in testing my voice, but I can not express my gratitude for your magnanimous offer to assist me in obtaining a musical education. I should be glad to accept this proffered aid if you will kindly allow me to repay you fully."

"The prima donna, smiling benignly, made answer: "Just as you please about that, Miss Pembroke. It is enough satisfaction for me that I have found a star. A star you will be. I shall arrange every detail for you before my engagements in Chicago terminate. When would you like to begin your studies?"

"At once," came Julia's answer, in quick, decided tones; "at least as soon as it is possible for me to begin," she added, thoughtfully.

"I like your spirit, truly I do," said Madame Cinati, energetically. "You are a girl of action, I judge."

One week from that day Julia was on board one of the big liners sailing out of New York harbor, on its voyage across the Atlantic.

Julia, in looking back upon her life in Chicago, felt herself ungrateful, indeed; for had she not been most fortunate in finding a woman of Madame Cinati's generosity? Had she not attained the heights for which her soul longed? Ah, yes, she had done all—all—all, which she had dared even to think of, and now she was gloomy and saddened, because the master had suggested her going higher up the ladder of fame—higher than had any singer yet gone.

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No, she would not allow a shade of disappointment to remain; she was here, and surrounded by all that could minister to the enhancement and embellishment of life in artistic Paris, and she would be grateful for it, and she would be genuinely happy throughout the entire year. She would live in anticipation of the glorious début, when the date of her appearance should be set.

She frowned and bit her lip, for the bitter in her cup of happiness lifted itself from the bottom, where she had thrust it with the stroke of a powerful will, and she shuddered at its bitterness.

She arose with an elastic spring and went to the piano, mentally saying, "My song will help me." She opened the score of "Lucia" and at the place of the sextet. Soon she was lost to all but its music and the meaning of the words—

"'Twas my hope that death would hide me  
From a doom of shame and anguish,  
But that comfort is denied me;  
In despair I yet must languish,"

for she had so thoroughly entered into the spirit of her work that she was the original "Bride of Lammermoor," and if there existed a difference in intensity of expressed grief, it was in favor of Julia; for the master had been as proud of her impersonations of the characters she had assumed as he had ever been of her voice.

She had been singing but some twenty minutes when a gentle, timid knock at the door recalled her from the oblivion of her surroundings.

"Ah, that must be the concierge," she thought, as she glanced at the little clock, which had smiled a real interest in her progress since that first day when, six years before, she had taken this apartment and had placed

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that tiny clock upon the little stand beside the piano. They had become the best of friends, for had not its pretty white face, so distinctly marked with the heavy, black Roman figures, become a living personality? And had not the neat little hands marked the hours through which she had pursued her course of study?

"Yes, it must be the concierge—perhaps a letter from Madame Cinati." Julia had surmised aright. It was the concierge, and she handed Julia a letter.

After closing the door, she looked at the superscription. That was Madame Cinati's handwriting, and the postmark was London. She broke the seal with the eagerness of a maiden in possession of her first letter and read.

When she had finished she exclaimed: "Indeed, I shall be there. How thoughtful dear Madame Cinati is! I am to hear Melba and Caruso in 'La Bohème'"—for they were to sing at Covent Garden on Saturday evening. "Let me see; I shall go up to London Saturday morning; that will give me plenty of time to be in readiness for the evening."

### CHAPTER III.

The dining room of the Hôtel Cecil, London, presented an unusually gay and brilliant appearance, for grouped everywhere throughout the magnificent room were many parties, by whose conversation one could easily learn that all might be taken for one great party, since it was evident that Melba, Caruso, "La Bohème" and Covent Garden formed the topic of conversation.

As one of the groups forming a part of the whole, Madame Cinati, Lord and Lady Trent and Julia Pembroke formed not the least interesting group, for though many seated as guests of the hotel had come up from Paris and other foreign centers, many were Londoners. As Lord and Lady Trent were of the most exclusive aristocracy of the English capital, their presence was sufficient to create a stir in the hearts of all lovers of society.

And, too, the table, at which was seated the great prima donna, Madame Cinati—Madame Cinati known to many socially, to all through her art—could not pass unnoticed; consequently the happy little group of four was a target for many eyes, and formed the subject of many whispered comments.

To-night the meeting of these couples as they were divided—Lord and Lady Trent as one, Madame Cinati and Julia Pembroke as the other—was an occurrence which had not been expected. Both were going to the exceptional performance of "La Bohème" at Covent Garden. Madame Cinati had known the Trents ever since she had made her London début at Covent Garden, some fifteen years before. She was then about five-and-twenty, a charming young singer, just appearing in that vast



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firmament, the operatic world. Her fame had come, as it often does to those great artists, at once. And ever since her début the Trents had been pleased to place her name among the exclusive ones who graced the halls of their manor or their London house.

The Trents had just come down to London from their country seat in Essex. They were to go to Paris the next day, and that was why they had stopped at the Hôtel Cecil instead of going to their London house, which had been closed for the winter.

"Indeed, Madame Cinati," remarked Lady Trent, whose face betrayed much anxiety, "my mind is never at ease. You can not understand, my dear Madame, what a commingling of joy and sorrow it is to be the mother of a young soldier, facing the dangers of that heathen land."

"Ah, indeed," sympathetically responded Madame Cinati; "I know it must be a great sacrifice you loving mothers make, when you send away your dear boys to do duty for their country."

Lady Trent looked down at the truffled pintado on toast which the waiter at that moment placed before her. Then pathetically elevating her eyebrows, she went on: "Yes, the sacrifice is great, and not an hour passes but I feel a foreboding of danger. I try to overcome this weakness, but to no purpose, for the fear"—

"Ah, tut! tut!" stoutly interrupted Lord Trent. "Let us be joyous here in the heart of our Merry Old England"—and he sat back to laugh, as if to lead in the joy he had suggested, as soon as he should swallow the bit of artichoke he had just taken.

"How clever of you, how clever of you, Lord Trent!" said Madame Cinati, and a low golden ripple escaped her lips. "I assure you I wish to be accounted one of your followers; but," and her face grew very tender

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as she concluded, addressing Lady Trent, "he has not a mother's heart, has he?"

Lady Trent again lowered her gaze, but this time it was down upon the floor. The mention of her sacrifice, and especially the mention of her beloved son, had touched her deeply. At this time Lady Trent was particularly sensitive to all that pertained to her son, for on Monday next, within some few hours, she was to clasp to her bosom her darling child, who during the past eight years had been far away in India, faithfully discharging his duty as a lieutenant in the British army, and now he had been granted a leave of absence, and Lord and Lady Trent would meet him in Paris, where they were to remain for some time.

But before Lady Trent had averted her eyes she had seen the peculiar nervousness betrayed in the eye of Julia Pembroke, who sat across the table from her. As was her mental habit, she at once attributed this nervousness on Julia's part to a sentimental feeling for her soldier boy. Every young woman of marriageable age and every fond mamma were, in her opinion, interested in the welfare of her son; in fact, no one of the feminine portion of those exercised over the conditions of the matrimonial market were exempt from the consideration of Lady Trent; but in this she was not unlike many another fond mamma, and so, by right of motherhood, should have a goodly portion of charity. A very few marriage contracts would have been acceptable to her when it came to the placement of her son's signature thereto.

Had Lady Trent been wiser than she thought herself to be, she would have known that Julia Pembroke's ear had been deaf to most that she and Madame Cinati had said of her son; perhaps had heard nothing, connectedly, of the dashing young English officer—Lieutenant Trent.

"How, now, my little American friend!" jollily inter-

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jected Lord Trent, not allowing time for Lady Trent to respond to Madame Cinati. "How, now! I see you can not join with Merry England; you are not able to eat roast beef and good salad." This he addressed to Julia, who had refused the roast beef and was now sitting back in her chair, with the salad untouched before her.

"Then, Lord Trent," quickly responded Julia, "I shall eat roast beef all my life; but you will kindly permit my objecting to the salad."

"Why so, Miss Pembroke? Salad—good, fresh salad—is half the dinner. And this salad is excellent." And Lord Trent cut and cut and cut his salad, pouring on oil and vinegar and vinegar and oil, until Lady Trent begged him to desist.

"No doubt, Lord Trent, you will laugh when I tell you that I am very fond of salad—as fond, I judge, as you are; but I am, thus far, a martyr to the art of song. Acids are one of the 'don'ts' of our diet."

"Lord Trent," broke in Madame Cinati, "in our little aside chat here Lady Trent has consented to grace my box with her presence on Monday next, when I sing in 'Les Huguenots' at the Paris Opéra. I may hope for your kind acceptance of a seat beside her, may I not?"

"You certainly can, my dear Madame Cinati. I accept with much pleasure your very gracious invitation," said Lord Trent. Then, bowing to Madame Cinati, he continued: "I should travel many, many miles to see and hear the greatest of *Queen Marguerites*."

When Lord Trent had ceased speaking, Madame Cinati, delicately poising the dainty spoon above the orange of which she had been eating, smiled in her most fascinating manner, and said: "I fear me you do me too much honor"; then glancing quickly from Lord to Lady Trent, she went on: "Thank you, thank you, thank you

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both; your acceptance does me proud. I shall sing my best to the occupants of my box—the Lord and Lady Trent and the brave Lieutenant Trent.”

Madame Cinati did not include Julia, for the reason that Julia could not be a guest in the opera box of Madame Cinati, since during the entire period of her study in Paris this box had been at her disposal whenever she chose to attend the opera; even though often occupied by guests of Madame Cinati, a seat was always reserved for Julia Pembroke.

Julia's eyes never once raised to meet those of Lady Trent, but the pink of her complexion deepened to a bright rose.

Lady Trent saw the color come and go, and inwardly enjoyed it.

Had she divined the real cause, she would have found it in the behavior of the gentleman seated at the table behind herself, and who sat facing Julia; and had she continued her observation she would have seen, as every student of human nature would have seen, the wireless messages passing from his strong, manly face, especially from his handsome black eyes, so full of manly fire, to the beautiful soft blue eyes, into which the message had gone without protest.

Julia, who in all her life had never been guilty of an indiscretion, felt annoyed. But with whom? Surely not with the sender of the tender message. To think ill of him could not occur to her as right, for what had he done? she inwardly asked herself. He was partaking of the evening meal, in the Hôtel Cecil, just as she was, and had all the rights and privileges to use his eyes just as well as she had.

Why, she thought, did she feel his regard and involuntarily return it in the same manner? This was a question which she was powerless to answer, for never before

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in her life had any pair of eyes—and she had encountered many thousands—made such havoc of her innate decorum—much less had she ever before found herself awakened to that stirring something now kindling within her soul—that something which caused an unwonted commotion within her; for two powerful emotions were contending for mastery of her when the dinner ended. Had Julia been able to penetrate the veil of mystery which at all times surrounds all persons, she had known that the pair of handsome eyes which had put her into this flutter was the same pair bent down upon her when she was handed the lost music on Rue Murillo; she had known, too, that the same pair of eyes had rested upon her many times during the crossing of the Channel, on her way from Paris to London, earlier in the day.

But at this moment she was innocent of all, except that she had been subjected to an unusual force from without, and that she had trembled at its power; so, without turning her head in the direction of the Adam who had entered her Eden of musical bliss, she left the scene of the strangest battle of her life, and disappeared from view of the stranger, who sat enjoying a cup of fragrant coffee of most delicious aroma.

## CHAPTER IV.

On the following evening but one, in the Paris Opéra, which, for descriptive beauty, lacks an adjective, were gathered together all the wealth and pomp and beauty for which this city stands preëminent.

Down in the orchestra stood a young man, who had not yet seated himself. Like many others in the orchestra, he was standing in his place, with his back to the stage, while his eyes went quietly and slowly around the glittering horseshoe. He was not fully alive to the effect of that scene before him. While others might look through opera glasses for long at the dazzling brilliancy of the occupants of the boxes, this particular stranger could not be said to have allowed his glasses to point in any direction, for they were seen to move constantly from left to right each time he raised them to his eyes. This gentleman, Hampton Alverstone, was handsome, and to the fair sex he would be very handsome, for his black eyes were large and luminous. The complexion, no doubt, was by nature white, but it was very evident that sojourns beneath torrid suns had made it a reddish brown; but that, together with the short pointed beard and mustache of a real French turn of the ends, made for a strikingly attractive face, for the nose was long and high, giving the appearance of much strength of character. In stature he was above the average for man, and every fiber of his symmetrical body was firmly and strongly knit together. He was straight and he moved easily and gracefully, yet with a strong, manly bearing. His step was firm, and carried with it a ring of genuine self-assurance, without that snobbish obtrusiveness, the chief

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characteristic of many persons whose few or many dollars carry them away from the narrowness of an early life into the broad daylight of the world.

In the left hand of Alverstone, upon which was a white glove, he carried the other glove, while in his right hand he held the glasses when not in use. After many surveys of the tiers his right arm dropped to his side and a look of disappointment came into his face. It was obvious that he saw not the one for whom he sought in all that glittering array of beautiful women and of handsome men, displaying the dress, the manners, the customs of many nations, gathered together to hear and to see that great lyric prima donna, Madame Cinati. It was a sight of fine fabrics, of costly gems, of flashing jewels, of beauty, of all that untold wealth could buy—a fascinating sight, such as Solomon in all his glory never saw, and in the vividness of his imagination never conceived.

Again he lifted the glasses, but this time he looked in one direction only, for he had noted at the last survey that only one box remained unoccupied. As he now brought this box near he saw a man in soldier's uniform enter the box and sit down, with his back turned toward the stage, and he seemed to be looking expectantly toward the entrance of the box, which was open. Hampton Alverstone had known Madame Cinati as the great lyric soprano at the Hôtel Cecil on the Saturday evening before, and he thought that the young lady forming one of the party at the table with Madame Cinati would, no doubt, come down to Paris to attend this performance. He had had little to assist him in obtaining a clew to the personality of the object of his passionate love, but since the development of true love between the first pair of sighing lovers, true love has never known insurmountable barriers; on the contrary, the more difficult of possession the more determined is Cupid that his shaft fails not to

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pierce and fasten forever the hearts at which he aims.

Alverstone turned and sat down, for the leader of the orchestra had rapped for attention, and the musicians ceased tuning and turned toward the director, in obedience to the summons. This box, which alone held interest for Alverstone, was to his left and a little in front of his seat. It was very easy for him to divide his attention between the box and the performers upon the stage. He knew that the blue-eyed young woman whom he had pleased to follow must have a seat in that box, if she came at all; for the entire house with this exception was filled before he had taken his seat. He told himself that he could afford to wait, if perchance he might yet see this young woman, but she came not, and the gay chorus was ended and De Nevers was singing. He assured himself that she might come yet, and he flattered himself that she seemed pleased with his notice of her in the Hôtel Cecil—at least he was sure she had given no sign of annoyance.

He had traveled far and wide, all over the civilized world, and in many parts of the world not civilized. His wealth was great, for he was rated as one of the very rich men of New York City. It was known that he was the owner of a very comfortable number of millions. As a companion he was unsurpassed, for on an ocean liner he was sure to find himself the central figure of the most interesting coterie on board; every one was pleased with Mr. Alverstone, and why should they not be?

To a lady whose society he found agreeable he would read aloud for hours, then in a short time after he was in the smoking room with some genial companions of his own sex. A party of schoolgirls doing a mile, in so many turns of the promenade deck, found him a gay pedestrian, entering into the constitutional for an hour at a time, and it was easily seen he was very acceptable



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to the fresh young maidens in their simple, almost childish glee.

From a rude person he would turn away, never for a moment forgetting that the most such persons merit is a look of reproach, if so much as that. He could have spoken of close intimacies with many of the crowned heads of many countries, and of closer intimacy with many at the head of governments as powerful, yet with not a crown but that of good citizenship. He was never found wanting in each and every virtue, consistent with the bearing of a gentleman, who is such by nature as well as by culture.

A man of this fashion could not but please a woman such as Julia Pembroke was, for to be such a gentleman as Hampton Alverstone means, first of all, to be a manly man, and, second, to be that other man, the result of all that education and culture, by extensive reading and travel, can produce; and he was both in the highest degree.

While Raoul was singing the romanza, "*Plus blanche qu' hermine*," there was a stir in the box under surveillance. Alverstone heard not more the song, for his brain was responsive only to the picture before his eyes. The young soldier, who had up to this time occupied the box alone, now arose, stepped to the right with his back still turned, and saluted the stately dame who entered and came directly to a seat at the front of the box. Alverstone saw at once that this was the same woman who had formed one of the party at the table with Madame Cinati in the Hôtel Cecil, at London, on the previous Saturday evening.

The house at this time was darkened, and Alverstone strained to see if the other members of that dinner party were to follow the one who was now seated. His eyes

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dilated as he looked with intensity to see if she—this young woman—this other member of the dinner party, would follow.

Coming close behind the elder woman he saw—what? Yes, yes, there she was; it was no one else. All had turned out as he had expected. The young woman had entered, and, after acknowledging the salutation of the young officer, came forward and took a seat beside the one who had first entered, and who was then looking intently at the singer, for the high note of the climax was singing. After her came the gentleman who had also been one of that party in London. He looked kindly at the officer, saluting him, and smiled his approval, and then he took his seat directly behind the elder lady, while the officer took the chair behind the young lady.

By this grouping it was impossible that Alverstone should see the face of the officer, for his face was hidden by the position of the elder lady.

The opera went on, Raoul had finished, the page was singing "*Salut, beau cavalier*," but Alverstone heard nothing, saw nothing, but the face of the young woman in that one particular box.

Alverstone judged from the manner in which the elder lady treated this young officer that he must be her son, for on the part of the lady was that tender affection, accompanied by that slow, gentle, sure inclination of the body—a loving mother's regard, whether expressed or understood.

Perhaps she is the officer's sister, he went on in his thought. No, brother or any relation by consanguinity never bent so tenderly to hear each word the companion of the gentler sex might wish to say.

Her radiant smiles were divided between the stage and the young officer. Alverstone could not repress a

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feeling of bitter disappointment. He now felt a dull thud instead of the strong, warm heart-throb with which he had greeted the young woman's appearance. At last the thought which at first he had entertained, but of which he had not allowed himself to continue, struck him boldly, and struck him as true. He knew it now; this young officer was her fiancé, or would be. It was a bitter, gloomy thought, and for Alverstone the evening was dark.

The curtain dropped; the first act was ended. The lights came on—all was again brilliant. Many throughout the house got up and went out, but Alverstone remained seated and motionless, with his eyes riveted upon the box, for the old gentleman had left the box, and the young officer had taken the seat made vacant by him.

Alverstone's breath came hard and quick, as if from some darting sensations of pain following each other in quick succession.

Why, that was the English officer, Lieutenant Reginald Trent, whom he had known so well in India, and the pleasurable emotion passed, for a pang of sorrow shot through his heart—he had loved a betrothed young woman—betrothed to one of his best friends. To Alverstone it never occurred that it might be his right to think of gaining her affection, much less to think of making her his wife. He sat helpless in the throes of bitter disappointment, but he had not long to meditate upon his condition, for Reginald Trent—it was his friend, Lieutenant Trent—left the box, and Alverstone immediately went out in great haste, intending to meet him in the grand foyer, if possible. When he started up the grand staircase of the Opéra he saw Lieutenant Trent at the top, where he had stepped aside and was deferentially awaiting the passing of a party of young schoolgirls, chaperoned by three teachers of their school. It was

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indeed a pretty sight, and the young English brave was as keenly alive to the pretty stir and flutter of the fresh young beauties as he would have been had the scene been one more precisely suited to his martial nature. He stood smiling upon them, while they passed. They ranged in ages from fourteen to eighteen. In the bevy was the dainty, modest, graceful and beautiful French girl, truly feminine. In the flash of those living eyes there lay a strength of femininity whose power she knew and would use when her hour should arrive. In a word, she was transcendentally perfect in those qualities which are diametrically opposed to what is masculine. There, too, was the young English girl, as sweet as English airs could make her. She had come across the Channel from her own little, yet all-sufficient, island, to learn of those pretty graces which the French people are so well prepared to teach. Her straight high-bearing carried with it that self-reliant poise so characteristic of the fully developed English woman, delightfully reminding one of the freshest of June roses, nodding hither and thither, when blown about by the warm, caressing breezes of summer; and this poise of character is the greatest charm of the English girl, as it is in later years the charm of the English woman, for the English woman must be considered a womanly woman—no, put down as the womanliest woman of womankind.

Last, but most conspicuous of the school, was a large sprinkling of the young girl from beyond the Atlantic—bright, sparkling, talkative, too brilliant in manners for the simplicity of dress required as a part of the education of young girls of the refined class of European society. She carried with her as an inseparable ingredient of her physical, mental and moral composition that self-sufficiency which belongs to the American girl and to the American woman alike. Should there be any degree of

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difference at all, the surplus goes with the girl, and not with the woman, for the American girl leads in her own land. At the age of twelve she begins to chafe under the direction of any force from without herself. She plans for her clothes, from the minutest detail on up to the most elaborate of costumes—costumes of extravagance, of conspicuity for which no European young girl dare entertain even a desire.

In truth, the European would as soon think of marriage without the consent of her guardian as she would think of arraying herself in showy costumes, bedecking herself with jewels and displaying her personal charms as does the American on every occasion.

When the young girl of America steps out of the primary department of life, she accepts no intermediate state. At once she feels herself full-fledged and ready, not for a timid bird's flight, but for the flight of that large liberty-loving bird—the glorious eagle, emblem of that country of which this girl is an exponent. Unlike her sisters across the sea, the American girl is a woman in mind and action, though a tender child in years.

Lieutenant Trent stood quite still and looked after the vanishing school, smiling his appreciation of their feminine tactics, and smiling an especial appreciation of the security of the English home over which such young English girls would soon preside; for a soldier looks upon every one as a defender of his own particular country, the man a direct defender and the woman an indirect; consequently he is an ardent lover of every man and of every woman.

He turned his head abruptly at the sound of a well-known voice beside him, and grasped the outstretched hand, shaking it heartily. "Why, Alverstone, what an unexpected pleasure you give me! I thought you had gone to America. You are well, I see."

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"Yes, I am very well, thank you. I am on my way to America. I stop in Paris for a short time only. Truly, I am glad I came here."

"And I am, too. We shall have a fine time here, for my parents came down to meet me, and we remain in Paris for some time. Come, old boy," he added, letting fall his hand, in friendly fashion, upon the shoulder of Alverstone; "come, let me introduce you to my parents. I know they will be glad to meet one of my tried and trusted old friends, and I think you will like them."

"Indeed," returned Alverstone, "I shall certainly like the parents of my good friend, Lieutenant Trent."

"Thank you," replied Trent, and they went on together in the direction of the box, for Trent wished to introduce his friend before the beginning of the second act.

As they neared the box Trent lowered his voice, and, inclining toward his friend, said in a confidential tone of voice, while Alverstone felt his blood run cold, for he feared Trent was about to say that he would also introduce him to his fiancée, but he only heard: "My dear Alverstone, there is in the box a guest of Madame Cinati—one of your own countrywomen—a protégé of Madame Cinati; I find her very interesting, quite intelligent upon many subjects; quite the opposite of many singers, and mother tells me she has a very fine soprano voice."

Alverstone, who had played a very successful part, by preserving a calm and politely interested expression of face, said: "I shall feel very happy, indeed, to meet Lord and Lady Trent," and, laughing agreeably, he added, "and I am always pleased to meet an American, especially to meet an American girl whom I shall find in intimate association with Lady Trent—your mother."

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Although Alverstone had no personal acquaintance with Lord or Lady Trent, he had known their son intimately in India, and he knew well the family rank in England.

He was congratulating himself upon his good fortune in thus meeting his friend Trent, when, as if to prove the truth of the trite saying, "There is no rose without a thorn," he saw, talking with an attendant of the vestiard, a woman, and, though the woman stood with her back turned toward the two men, this was sufficient for Alverstone. He knew her, and turned his face from her to look at Trent, who, fortunately, was upon his right, while she was upon his left.

Alverstone recognized the woman as an acquaintance in Calcutta, India, and a person of whom he had always felt a secret dread. Why, he could not have explained, but certain he was that he felt most uncomfortable in her presence. The last time he had been with her, in Calcutta, he was glad to be able to tell her that he was soon leaving for America.

Without his knowledge, this same woman took advantage of this information and planned accordingly. She loved this Alverstone with a love born of desperate passion, and this passion for the young American had torn her bodily and mentally since that evening when her husband, Banker Nitolsk, the great financier, had introduced him as a friend, whom he trusted enough to admit into the sacred precincts of his family circle, and this trust Alverstone had never betrayed.

A few thoughts flashed with lightning rapidity through the brain of Alverstone.

Strange she had not told him of this intended visit to Paris. He had told her on the evening of his departure from Calcutta that he had planned to stop at Paris on his way home to New York.

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Strange with all this intelligence that she had not mentioned the fact of her visit, for she must have left India the same time he did.

"Here we are," said Trent, as he signified the entrance to the box, which was their objective point.

As Alverstone turned to the right to enter the box, he looked into the face of Lieutenant Trent, who was still at his right, and in so doing he was able to see, unperceived, that Madame Nitolsk had not moved from the spot where she had been when they had passed her. He knew she had seen and recognized him. He hoped, however, that she did not think he had seen her.

The formalities of the introduction being over, Alverstone accepted Lady Trent's very kind invitation to spend the remainder of the evening with them. Trent placed two chairs for himself and Alverstone to the left of Julia, yet behind her and forming a quadrant, so that when she turned to her left she looked into the face of both, but more easily into the face of Hampton Alverstone.

When Alverstone had entered the box a warm blush had made itself felt upon the face and throat of Julia, but as she turned her eyes upon him when he took the chair to which Lieutenant Trent had invited him she smiled as composedly as if he were an old friend.

Though little of interest was said during the remainder of the evening, at least little that might be construed into a happy dénouement of Cupid's intrigues, he was alert and constantly watching for a favorable opportunity to use his bow and arrow, and as he is a very wary little elf, with tactical skill in concentrating his forces upon the eyes, he sent many a shaft to the exact spot, for throughout the entire evening he fought with the zeal and tenacity of a Napoleon.

When the aria, "*O beau pays de la Touraine*," was finished, Alverstone declared that he had never heard



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any one sing so divinely, and little Cupid tittered, for he understood why the singing was unusual to Alverstone. Madame Cinati always sang well, always created the same furore she had created tonight. Her name alone was sufficient to fill the house at any time of the year, either in season or out of season.

In the fourth act, when Raoul, kneeling to Valentine, sang in his passionately dramatic tone, "*Tu m' aimes!*" Julia's eyes involuntarily sought those of her newly found friend, but for only a passing moment. She smiled sweetly and unconsciously, and it was her unconsciousness that pleased Alverstone.

From this attention he judged that this American girl was free to accept any declaration which he, in the course of events, should wish to make to her. He thought she had kept pace with him in the regard with which they had been pleased to notice each other. Surely at the earliest opportunity he would make known his love by words—they had done so by strokes of the eye.

She reminded him much of his boyhood days and of his boyhood surroundings. Perhaps that was why she appealed to him in such a manner as to arouse what should have been his boyhood love, and what in reality was the same, for in all his eight-and-twenty years of life he had not known love for any woman; at least he had not met a woman who had been capable of inspiring this high, noble emotion, which dwells in the soul and which can destroy the body, the soul, or both.

"Ah, Mr. Alverstone, do not, I pray you, disappoint us on to-morrow." This Lady Trent urged upon Alverstone with a very cordial manner. She loved her son so devotedly that every one who in any measure administered to his happiness in life, came in for a warm maternal embrace, so to speak.

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Alverstone could now enjoy fully that bounty and hospitality lavished upon those within the circle of her acquaintance.

"Thank you, Lady Trent; this is charming," said Alverstone; "I shall surely avail of this privilege."

And while bowing to the party within the auto, he forgot not to give his last smile to Julia, who sat as quietly consistent as the most conventional English aristocracy might exact. And she absorbed the warmth of his glance and sweetly answered back in the same silent language—a smile.

"Mother," said Lieutenant Trent, "I should like to walk home with Alverstone."

Lady Trent beamed upon her boy, saluting before her, and replied: "Though I have not had you for the past eight years, I am not jealous. Go, my son, and enjoy the fine air this beautiful night. I like your friend; he will do you no harm."

Alverstone and Trent, with hats raised, bowed their thanks, the good nights were said, the door closed and the electric landau sped away from the Opéra, off around the corner, out the Boulevard des Capucines, down Rue Royale, across the Place de la Concorde, up Champs Elysées.

## CHAPTER V.

"Pshaw!" ejaculated Lieutenant Trent, when in front of the Grand-Hôtel des Capucines, "I have lost my opera glasses. They are priceless for the bit of daring connected with the history of my possession of them."

"Let us return and look for them," suggested Alverstone. When they had reached the Opéra, Trent said: "Stay here, Alverstone; I'll run up and see if they are in the box. I think I recall laying them on that chair near the door."

Then he ran up the steps, and Alverstone saw him disappear, after ascending the grand staircase within.

Alverstone stood perfectly still, thinking over the events of the evening, and especially over the good fortune he had had in meeting the young singer, whose acquaintance he had so earnestly longed to make. Then the dreaded vision of Madame Nitolsk swept across his brain. It was like a sirocco from the desert, parching and blasting every vestige of living, growing vegetation in its path, for under the sweep of that dreaded vision every tender feeling, every knightly sentiment, every emotion of love subsided, and, as it were, became dead grass and lifeless stubble; or, to change the figure, the horrid presence was to him a bitter precipitant poisoning his then cup of sweets.

He started at the familiar touch of a dreaded hand laid upon his arm. "I make you start, do I?" said the sweet, deep voice of Madame Nitolsk.

"Indeed, you do me that honor," laughed Alverstone, in affected surprise.

"You did not think to find me here," went on the

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same low voice, as before, though perhaps a trifle deeper than that in which had been made the interrogation.

"Truly not," responded Alverstone. "I thought you said when last I saw you that you intended remaining in India another year, and that from there you would go to Russia."

"Ah, Mr. Alverstone, you seem to forget what all admirers of the clinging sex should know."

"What is that?" he asked, in real surprise.

"That woman is ever changeful, and that not for one hour does she know whither herself will lead herself."

This she answered in a manner so flippant that Alverstone's eyes rested upon her in a set stare, for he had not before known her in this mood.

The cunning eye of Madame Nitolsk quickly caught the meaning of the expression upon his face, and she hastened to add, by way of palliation: "Perhaps you think my character a trifle lighter than you had yet seen. Well, my dear friend, I have been a widow for over a year, and my life during this period of seclusion has been too sombre for health. I was forced to seek a change, and surely in this gay city I ought to find the requisite medicine."

This she said low and hurriedly, for she had seen—though Alverstone had not seen—that the young officer was returning.

"I am in fine luck," said Trent on nearing Alverstone. "That policeman yonder picked up my glasses."

As Trent came down the steps Madame Nitolsk turned and moved slowly away and toward the street, so that Trent did not see that she and Alverstone had been together.

Alverstone, fearing lest he might anger her by the least show of neglect on his part, made mention to Trent that she was a friend of his in India, and that they had

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met here very unexpectedly at the moment when he had gone into the Opéra, and he finished by asking: "Will you meet her, Lieutenant?"

"Yes, yes, certainly," answered Trent, with emphatic eagerness.

"Madame Nitolsk," said Alverstone, for she had moved but a short distance from them, "may I have the honor to introduce my friend, Lieutenant Trent, a British officer, stationed in India?"

Madame Nitolsk had expected this, for she understood the generous nature of Alverstone, and had gone very slowly as she went away. On hearing the address, she turned and graciously acknowledged the introduction.

"Indeed," said Lieutenant Trent, saluting respectfully, "I had the honor of an acquaintance with the late Monsieur Nitolsk, the financier."

"Ah, indeed! this is delightful," replied Madame Nitolsk, and she looked in the direction of a carriage then passing near.

Trent, thinking she desired a carriage, asked: "May I get you a carriage?"

"Oh, no," she answered; "I live just a few steps from here, on Rue Caumartin."

"We go in that direction. May we have the pleasure of the walk with you?" asked Trent.

"Thank you, Lieutenant Trent; I shall esteem it a favor. We can chat as we go," she said, and they started up the Rue Auber. "I am much interested in your position in India," she went on, addressing herself to Trent. "How came you to know my husband?"

"It was in a Sepoy mutiny," replied Trent. "I was captured by the enemy, but soon escaped, and succeeded in getting back to Delhi, closely pursued, however, by a howling band, closing in fast upon me. I darted into a bank and pleaded for protection, when a man seated in

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the private office unlocked the door and said, 'Come into my office.' He showed me a hidden vault in the wall, which I had just entered when the terrible roar of my pursuers was heard, for they had seen me enter the bank. Banker Nitolsk, for it was he who saved my life, invited them to examine the room, but they could not find me, for no sign of the door leading into my place of concealment was at all visible. After they had gone on their way I was taken out, more dead than alive."

"Ah, indeed! that was like my husband. He was so resourceful; always prepared to meet every emergency."

And her handkerchief was called into requisition, for the tears were running down her cheeks, but she caught them, thus displaying dramatic grace, something that counted for much to her. After a moment's silence, she went on: "Ah, I remember; you are the young officer who gave my husband the jeweled sword, are you not?"

This she emphasized, not only by the energy of tone and movement of words, but also by the impulsive, though gentle, grasp of his arm, which she patted caressingly with the other hand.

"Yes, I gave him a sword out of the gratitude I felt toward him."

"I have the sword here in Paris with me."

"Indeed!" said Trent, with strong emphasis.

"Yes, I have many mementos of my husband, for I wish our little son, Adino, to see them every day and to know the value of each to his late papa."

She desired her son to become a great banker like his father, for she knew that a splendid man had gone from earth when her husband had died. Banker Nitolsk stood without a superior, and he had few peers when judged for his abilities and boundless resources as a financier.

"I was much grieved to hear of his death," added

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Trent. "At the time I was on duty in the North, near Serinagur."

This came from the Lieutenant slowly and solemnly. Perhaps, as was natural, in fancy he was standing before his rescuer, expressing his gratitude, while the words he was speaking to the widow passed out mechanically.

Madame Nitolsk, slipping one hand through his arm and dropping it gently, lightly tapping his hand with the tips of her fingers, said, in an imploring, beseeching voice: "You will do me the favor to bestow this kind remembrance of my dear dead husband upon myself and our little son, Adino, will you not?"

"That I shall certainly do, for to your husband's presence of mind I owe my life. I am ever at your service, Madame Nitolsk, whenever, in honor, I can serve you."

"Thank you, Lieutenant Trent; I shall remember this. Here is my home," she said, stopping in front of a very handsome building. "I have taken this for a year."

Then she turned to Alverstone, and in her sweetest manner said: "My dear Mr. Alverstone, you are generous, and you can appreciate the situation, so do not feel, I beg of you, that Lieutenant Trent and I intentionally avoided speaking directly with you."

"Ah, Madame Nitolsk, I could not attribute even an unkindness to my friend, Lieutenant Trent, and I hope I may hold Madame Nitolsk in the same high regard," politely replied Alverstone.

"Indeed you may," responded Madame Nitolsk.

Then, laying a hand on the arm of each of the young men, she said, in an indescribably sweet voice: "I beg of you, visit me early. Come informally, if you will, together or separately; you know me, and, being connected with my dead husband, who loved you both, I really have for you a very tender regard."

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Then she put up her handkerchief and touched her eyes, as if to catch unshed tears that might at least be supposed to lurk there.

The men promised all she wished, and, bowing becomingly, departed. At the same time she went in, for her butler had opened in response to the ring, and had stood ceremoniously by, awaiting her pleasure, for ceremony ruled her with a tyrannical hand, and she, in her turn, as despotically governed her servants.

During the walk from the Opéra to her home, Alverstone had been pleased to find her entertained by Trent, for he was glad to be allowed quiet, in which to think over the fortunate turn which had led Trent and himself to meet at this time; for, had it not been for Trent, he had not now known Miss Pembroke. Over all this delightful musing there hung a cloud, but he was far too happy for it to cause him much annoyance.

He had cared nothing at all for Madame Nitolsk; really, he owed to himself that he was not only impassive, but that, in truth, he disliked her.

In Calcutta she had annoyed him with her importunities—urging his acceptance of invitations to social functions, in which she reigned a social queen; for she was the wife of a very influential man, and she knew how to profit by her position, which was well supported by all to which wealth can minister. During the past year Hampton Alverstone had left Calcutta often, simply to be away from her; but he soon found her at the same place, and always upon a very genuine pretext.

Finally, in despair, he had accepted an invitation to a little social affair in her palatial residence, and then told her of his intention to return to New York. And now, here they were again, meeting almost immediately after his arrival, for he had not been in Paris one week.



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"Alverstone," said Trent, after they had lit their cigarettes and started back upon their way to the Café de la Paix, "that woman is a stirring creature. What eyes! Why, I feel their fire yet!"

"You are not the only person in the world into whom that pair of eyes has sent its fire," Alverstone, laughing lightly and pleasantly, made answer.

They walked down in silence, for both were smoking and enjoying the delayed cigarette far better than it were possible to enjoy conversation, even on woman, in all her loveliness. Soon they reached the Café de la Paix and took seats near the door. Alverstone ordered light wine, Lieutenant Trent dark.

"And so, my friend," said Trent, filling his glass the second time, "you have been under fire of those fine black eyes?"

"No, indeed, Lieutenant," quickly and testily came the answer. "So far as I am concerned, the field is yours. I am seldom drawn toward the dark-eyed beauty."

"Ah! there, my boy, drink a little of this red Bordeaux, and then tell me what you think. It will work wonders. It makes a man reveal secrets, and for the purpose of looking on the bright side of life your white wine is too tame."

Alverstone laughed, but refused to take of the red Bordeaux, saying: "Your dark wine can not change my views. I am not made that way."

"Now, do explain yourself," said Trent; "for my part, I am drawn to the eyes of all colors, but I have a preference for the woman who looks at me with a pair of orbs of dark, luminous depths. I like to look into them and feel that I can not fathom the mystery they hide, for to me they are never readable. You look approval of my taste. May I presume that I have made a convert? Do you not prefer fair woman's smile, when lit by the

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radiant eye of dark, velvety softness? Speak, Alverstone."

This he asked and said, with his imagination decidedly quickened by his glasses of dark wine, which he also preferred for its dark, subtle force, to the wine of pale hue, and of more delicate imagination.

"No, no, my friend; my preference remains unchanged; I give it to the"—

"There! there!" suddenly ejaculated Trent, signifying by a glance in the direction of the door; "see that splendid woman going yonder with that man? She is the exact type of dark beauty I admire most, for I have a preference even among them."

"Oh," said Alverstone, after contenting himself with looking at the woman, "she would be likely to please most any one; yes, she is fine looking."

"You see," said Trent, who had noticed a very much satisfied elevation of Alverstone's eyebrows, "your eyes are filled only with visions of the large black eye—the Oriental, so to speak. Now, this woman is a pronounced type of the woman from the center of France—Touraine—and if your face does not betray you, I know she has called forth your admiration. Am I right or wrong?"

"You are right. She is a very handsome woman."

And this was true, for she was most fastidiously stylish in dress, in person and in carriage of body; medium height, slight, quick of movement, and in manner and speech very vivacious, almost to a point of nervousness.

The couple seated themselves not far off, and Trent and Alverstone had a good view of the woman, who sat with her face toward them.

At the table a man of dignified and studious demeanor was sitting when they had entered, and he joined them in a lively chat as though they were friends.

Soon, from broken threads of conversation, it was

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seen that the woman was the wife of the dignified personage.

"That type is quite different from the type we just left," said Alverstone.

"Oh, yes, Madame Nitolsk!" exclaimed Trent. "Indeed, yes; but Madame Nitolsk is of the dark type I call ravaging beauties—you understand, Alverstone."

"Oh, yes, I suppose I do," said Alverstone, wearily.

"Oh, yes, I know you do," added Trent; "and more, I suspect my good friend, Hampton Alverstone, late of India, now of Grand-Hôtel, Paris, deeply in love with this dark-eyed widow."

"Your dark wine is growing dangerous, I fear," replied Alverstone, good-humoredly. "At least," he continued, "I know that your imaginations upon that score are entirely at fault."

"Well, then, Alverstone, you do not aver that you are wholly insensible to her charms?"

"Yes, I do; I experience not the least spark of emotional influence from her."

This reply Alverstone made with asperity and with not a little irritation perceptible in tone and manner, and with a decidedly annoyed toss of the head on one side.

"Well, well," said Trent; "this is great, I must confess. I saw she was not a little nettled at having to speak with me, to the exclusion of her dear friend, Mr. Alverstone, even though the subject matter of the talk with me was the virtues of her late husband. I thought—I thought—well, I thought"—He paused and looked steadily at Alverstone, in a teasing manner, in hopes of irritating him into some kind of confession regarding the exact relations existing between him and Madame Nitolsk.

"You really thought what?" asked Alverstone.

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But Trent only smiled as before; smiled and gazed in so tantalizing a manner that Alverstone for the moment forgot himself and lost his head.

"There is nothing at all of interest between us. It is she who has always made advances to me, not me to her. I really feel burdened with her notice. She is so trying, if she wishes to importune one."

Alverstone, having delivered himself thus, attacked his opponent with a question pertaining to the blonde type of woman—"An Englishman like you should prefer the fair"—

"Ha! ha! ha!" again laughed Trent. "I see your white wine has been as effective to stir you to visions of loveliness in the fair as my dark wine has stirred me to a sense of loveliness in the dark of womankind. Now this is an argument for the temperance lecturer—light wine inclines the mind to the more celestial affairs—pictures of loveliness, with that light in the eye such as limners always give to the saints; while the dark wine makes man long for the things that pertain to things terrestrial. In other words, makes man wander amid the dark beauties, in his earthly paradise. Now, Alverstone, I mean to be steady for a time." And he went on gently and confidentially. "I saw that you were much pleased with Miss Pembroke from the moment you met her; indeed, you acted like old friends, both of you, and she seemed equally pleased with you. Pshaw, Alverstone, don't look so forbidding. I know you took an interest in each other just as soon as you met. If I did not know better, I should say you were friends before this evening."

"You are a good fellow, Lieutenant, to take so much kindly interest in me; but I offer no objection, for I do like Miss Pembroke—first, because she is an American, and, second, because she is an American after the highest standard of American cultivation."

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"I thought as much," responded Trent. "Your opinion of woman, no doubt, has suffered a change—for the better, however—since meeting Miss Pembroke, a few hours ago."

"No, I think not, Lieutenant, for I have always felt, and still feel, that woman should be a companion piece, and, as I am so constituted as to desire no such acquisition, I am not much influenced by woman, further than the interest I take in a social way; in other words, I have never felt the least inclined toward the position of master of a home, consequently I have no use for a mistress of a home."

"Well, my boy, you are in for more than a passing social interest in the woman we met to-night," rejoined Trent, again laughing teasingly. For, being a tease by nature, he had indulged so fully in this unbecoming quality that he was known among his army friends as such, when he was not worse—a torment.

"Which one?" excitedly interrogated Alverstone, the hot blood mounting to his face.

"Which one! Oh, pshaw, you know!" answered Trent.

"Madame Nitolsk?" again demanded Alverstone, sternly.

He would not trust his quick, bounding pulse with the name—Miss Pembroke.

"Oh, no, not that ravaging charmer. You could never love her," and, lowering his voice, "neither could any other man love her. She is not capable of inspiring love—she inspires only passion."

"Thank you, Lieutenant—your hand—on that point we fully agree."

And Alverstone put his hand over the table to Trent, who grasped it firmly.

Perhaps—who knows?—these men had never made

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this mutual confession without the aid of the cup that cheers and can inebriate; but wine makes havoc with the secrets of all those who imbibe at the garrulous fountain.

While yet holding the hand of Alverstone, Trent said: "You fell in love with Miss Pembroke as soon as you met her in our box. I do not ask a confession—but you did."

Alverstone withdrew his hand, and, smiling, said: "You are frank, and I like you for it. Now, then, one question more, and I trust, my friend, you will show me this same frankness of spirit in dealing with it. Do you not find more than an ordinary passing interest in this same young woman, to whom you introduced me?"

This question he put for the simple reason that he was anxious to know the exact regard in which Trent held Julia Pembroke. In other words, he wished to know if the praise of Miss Pembroke, as spoken by Lady Trent to her son, had aroused within him an especial interest in the young woman.

Trent was a far-seeing man at times, and quickly divined his friend's position, and as quickly answered: "I saw that you saw, that you came and that you conquered. I pronounce it a genuine case of 'love at first sight,' and, what is better yet, Alverstone, I should say it is love reciprocated. You can smile, my friend," Trent went on, hurriedly; "I am correct in this bit of prophecy; but you may not be able to carry off the prize, for that is another matter; she is ambitious, and an ambitious woman is not easily won, if won at all, when love would interfere with the object of her ambitious desires. However this results, I wish you a long and prosperous life."

And raising his glass, he proposed to drink to the future happiness of Alverstone, whether married or unmarried. They drank and then went out of the *Café de la Paix* in a gay mood, for each had learned that

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which was as he would have ordered it, had it been something he might have ordered.

Trent had feared that Madame Nitolsk had a reason for the preference she had shown for Alverstone. Now he had had from the lips of Alverstone, whom he trusted, a positive denial of any existing condition of affection between himself and Madame Nitolsk. And Alverstone knew that Trent had no matrimonial designs upon Miss Pembroke; so two happy young men lit their cigarettes and were soon mingled with the mass then crowding along the sidewalk in front of the Grand Hôtel, on Boulevard des Capucines.

They kept along the boulevard, now and then saying a word, but the large Olympia Music Hall just then dismissing, the crowded boulevard became densely packed with the throng, hurrying along, each person or party in haste to get to the preferred place for the usual theater supper or other refreshment.

"Let us slip off this boulevard," said Alverstone. "I came out with you for a breath of air, but this crowd makes me feel dizzy, and then my head is hot."

"That should be the condition of your heart instead; it should be exceedingly warm, after your successful encounter this evening," said Trent, jocularly, and, taking a firm grasp of the arm of Alverstone, they turned the next corner and found themselves on the Rue Cambon.

"Here, said Trent, "take a fresh cigarette," and he offered Alverstone one from his case.

They lit and smoked and walked on in silence for a short time, evidently enjoying the freedom of the quiet street after the hot air of the crowded boulevard.

Just then they were at peace with the world, so far as their senses were concerned, for under the influence of the sparkling wine and the quieting cigarette they were in love with the world in general. It would have been

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impossible to have gotten from them a word other than that there could be no better place than old mother earth, and no happier persons than Lieutenant Trent and Hampton Alverstone.

The true effect of an evening's indulgence in drinking and in smoking is without limitations, and this effect is best told some few or many years after.

"What's that?" cried Alverstone, as a sound of glass, like the breaking of a window, fell upon the stillness of the street.

"Don't know," said Trent; "but what is that? A cab—yonder?" And he went out to the edge of the sidewalk to see better. Alverstone followed.

"Yes, it is a cab," and the soldier dashed ahead, to see what was wrong, and Alverstone came behind.

A man standing near the cab, evidently seeing the approach of persons, betook himself in the greatest of haste, and was soon at a safe distance, even if pursued.

"What's the matter here?" demanded Trent, in stentorian tones, as he came up.

The cab door was open. A man was inside, but was lying limp against the farther corner of the cab, as if he had drawn to that side in a retreat from his assailant.

"Apache! Apache!" came in bated breath from the almost paralyzed driver.

Every one who knows Paris knows the danger of an attack by the Apaches. No driver attempts to save his patron from these ruffians, for the bands of Apaches that infest the city of Paris would remember him if he made the least attempt to do so. It was evident that this Apache had struck at the man with his cane, and in so doing had broken the glass, and, in a struggle to obtain his little purse, which now lay on the floor of the cab, with the coins scattered about, he had cut the man's wrist.



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"Cocher, drive to the nearest pharmacy," said Trent.

At the pharmacy the man was soon revived, and his wounds, which were slight, were dressed by an attending surgeon, who was called; then he was helped into a cab, with promises from Trent of a visit from him on the morrow—rather some time to-day, as he lightly put it, it was then two in the morning. "Good-night, Alverstone," he added; "I'll see you, too, later in the day."

And he waved them good night, as the carriage turned to go back toward the Boulevard des Capucines.

The two men who had come to the rescue of the attacked man had walked out Rue Cambon for fresh air, and they had it. But they had not free air, because some one had gone farther off along a forbidden way than had others, thus arriving at the stage of degeneracy which produced the Apache—these children of darkness, though made in the image of God—made to bless God's earth, and not to curse it, who, if trained aright, might bring about the prophesied millennium, for characters forceful as are those of the uncontrollable Apaches of Paris would throw the balance of power with ennobling influences of the civilized world. But only in the nurseries of these poor wretched creatures is it worth the while to work. Beyond that fruitful spot hope of reform is dead.

Alverstone assisted the wounded man into his apartment, then bade him good night, with the promise of a visit soon.

As Alverstone emerged from the building in which the wounded man had his apartment, he said: "To the Grand-Hôtel des Capucines, cocher," and reëntered the cab.

Soon he was in his rooms at the Grand Hôtel, with nerves enough wearied to allow of some sleep, if not of much sleep.

## CHAPTER VI.

"Good morning, mother," said Trent, accompanying the address with his customary salute, for he was very respectful to his mother.

"Good morning, my son; you are well, I see. I hope you enjoyed the evening with your old friend, Mr. Alverstone."

"Thank you, mother dear; we had a fine chat over our glasses at the Café de la Paix; but"—he looked down at his hand, which he moved slowly across the back of a heavily carved chair, stopping at the deep grooves and pressing the end of the forefinger into them and then drawing it out again, and moving it on to the next—it was the trick of a small boy, but Trent, though seven-and-twenty, did as all men do at critical moments—he acted simply, and simplicity is the acting-theme of childhood.

Lady Trent noticed the hesitation, and paused in her writing, but she did not look up. "Well, what is it, Reginald?"

Her tone was half unconcerned, as she continued writing, but there was an anxiety about the inflection. Trent did not remark it, and again said: "Well, mother, I had the good fortune to meet a friend from India soon after you left us, at the Opéra."

"Indeed! That was nice, and who was the friend, may I ask?" This Lady Trent put quite calmly, and without looking up from the letter, which she was folding.

"Yes, mother, it was a Madame Nitolsk, the wife of the financier Nitolsk, the man of whom I wrote you—the banker—who saved my life in that Sepoy mutiny."

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Ah, thought Lady Trent, perhaps it is good fortune, perhaps it is not; but she gave the thought no voice, for she was too wise to arm an adversary with giving expression to an indiscreet remark. She only smiled and said: "I am always glad, my son, to know that you are among friends."

"They were among the best of the social world of Calcutta, mother, and I hope you will extend to her the hospitality you are so capable of extending to your friends."

"Well, my son, I shall see."

"Mother, I should like to have her present on the occasion of this evening, in our home here—your reception in my honor."

"This evening!" exclaimed Lady Trent, turning around and looking at her son in great amazement. "Why, my son, it is too late! It would not be good form, to say the least—and, besides, the lady might be offended at such haste on my part."

"I'll manage that, mother," said Trent, hurriedly. He wished to convince his mother, for he knew how immutable her final decision would be.

Lady Trent was a very conservative woman, as regarded the choice of friends. The Lord and Lady Trent had never known a scandal in their home. They were a most exemplary family, and this, too, in the midst of a large following of the usual languorous social lights which grace the halls of rich and poor, high and low, religious and irreligious alike.

Lieutenant Trent was very handsome, as he stood there before his mother, with one hand resting on the basket of his sword, while the other hung from the wrist just over one end of the rather high-backed chair. He was tall, but the broad shoulders, together with the

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strong build of the body, did not make him look his height. His waist was very long and made him every inch a soldier. His hands were broad and well-knit; the fingers, of medium length, seemed short, because the hand was wide where they joined it at the palm. His fingernails had a bizarre way of looking frank, as some nails do, and so did the thumb, which stood straight out from the well-set hand.

Many women who had loved him had declared, in adoration, or maybe in flattery, that the turn of the thumb had been formed by the frequent use of the heavy sword. But he only laughed at their harmless laudation, and had shown them his left thumb, which was a Dromio of the right, as should be, but withal, the hand was a noble hand—a good outward mark of a lieutenant in the British army, who had gained his rank by active service.

The face was somewhat oval, though no one would have said it, for it seemed nearer the square. His lower jaw was thrust out a trifle, but it was not a natural set; more likely the life of the soldier had formed it, for the wide mouth had very narrow lips, and the lower lip had a way of protruding beyond the upper, when he was thoughtful, which was not very often, for, like many great generals, he rarely meditated. He acted on the moment. The corners of the mouth hung down, but this was also formed, and not natural.

The soft chestnut hair was aristocratic, from the left, where it parted and fell across to the other side of the head, to the round, neat turn, just behind the ear. It was thick hair, though very fine, and the way it turned back just at the right temple gave a decision to the high, prominent forehead and a keenness to the eyes which should have looked gentle, for they were cerulean. They were not small eyes, but they appeared small, for the bone of

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the cheek was high, as it nearly always is in the faces of great martial heroes. The eyebrows were straight, and marked no especial characteristic.

The nose was high, straight and very regular. The skin was healthy, though it was very brown, and just a tinge of color showed through the burned brown of the cheek.

He had an easy carriage, though he held himself very erect. He looked like an Englishman, but he did not walk like one. This was Sir Reginald Trent. There were times when he became "the soldier," and then he was debonair, careless, and there was an elasticity about his step, and his eyes had a fierce light in them. The jaw would thrust itself farther forward, and the spot where the hair turned backward at the right temple would seem higher and more prominent.

He was a noble lord. He was a daring fighter. He was a gay companion. He had a strong mind, but he had not such a mind as to be entirely deaf to the persuasive lull of a fair woman's voice. He was well worth a mother's anxiety.

Lady Trent looked at him long and earnestly, but the frank, fearless eye and the honest poise of the body were unaccusing signs, and Lady Trent's gaze became tender, for she knew; it was not an unpardonable fault, it was only one of the indiscretions of youth.

"My son," said Lady Trent, in a voice filled with tenderness, "if this were a gathering of a cosmopolitan nature, it would be all very well, and I should offer no objections, but as it is a very select party of very congenial persons, I do not see the way clear to introduce a stranger, of whose character I know nothing, except that she was the wife of a rich man in India, and that she moved in social circles there. It may seem severe to my soldier boy, but he should remember that there must be

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some recommendation of real merit before the mother of Lieutenant Reginald Trent can conscientiously introduce strangers to her friends, who will gather this evening to do honor by their presence, thus acknowledging their confidence in the discretionary powers of the hostess."

"Yes, mother, I see; perhaps I have grown careless in such matters, but I do wish she might come."

His voice showed the disappointment, and for a time neither mother nor son tried to speak.

Trent had seated himself in an easy-chair, and was quiet, except for a slight motion of his right foot, which hung from a footrest, over which he had thrown it. His head had dropped slightly forward, and he thoughtfully watched the movement of his foot.

Lady Trent, who was seemingly busy with the arrangement of the letters she had just finished writing, let her eyes find her son and rest upon him without his knowledge of the same. She wished to read, if possible, whether her son was very fond of this woman, on whom he wished to confer this favor, or if it was simply out of gratitude.

Her heart smote her as she read, for she was certain that gratitude was not the motive for the act, and Lady Trent had always cherished a desire that from among the fair daughters of English ancestry Reginald, her boy, would choose his bride.

"How long has she been a widow?" nonchalantly asked Lady Trent. "Perhaps she would not be able to accept for this reason, if for no other."

Secretly she hoped it would prove the necessary barrier, for she knew that her son was over-rash in his warmth of gratitude, to say the least; for to Lady Trent there were numerous other ways to show gratitude than by doing what might prove at least an indiscretion, if not an offense, to the good taste of her invited guests.

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"She has been a widow some fourteen months, and her physician advised travel and change for her health.

"Did she tell you this?" again asked Lady Trent, in the same careless manner.

"Yes, she told Alverstone and me this last evening. We walked home with her from the Opéra. She lives in a magnificent place, on Rue Caumartin."

Lady Trent was almost breathless with astonishment that her son should ask her to invite to an exclusive gathering of some several hundred guests a woman to whom he had been introduced at the Opéra door, and then he had been permitted by her to accompany her home. She only said:

"Reginald, I really do not see my way clear to do this. If it were as I said before, a cosmopolitan affair, even an official affair, I might consider it; but I can not conscientiously do it on this occasion."

"Very well, mother; but I assure you that the pain your refusal gives me is great. Why, mother, that woman is the widow of the man who, a few years ago, saved me from death by horrible torture. Were it not for her late husband I would not now be here to ask of you this token of gratitude. I wish to be a dutiful son, but to the late Banker Nitolsk, whose name this woman bears, I owe my life, which you, my dear mother, could not at that hour have saved, even with the aid of all the assembled exclusiveness of this evening. But"—

He paused abruptly, arose and paced rapidly around the room, yet with no show of anger, for he was a gentleman in the presence of his mother—she could not remember a time when her Reginald forgot himself to her.

"Mother," he resumed, I think Madame Nitolsk a perfect lady in manners, and one perfectly acquainted with all form required in the most exclusive of social

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gatherings; and, further, I am sure she will never cause you regret that you have invited her."

Lady Trent knew her son cared much for the woman, who had made his acquaintance only last evening—no, last midnight, she thought, with bitterness—and had had him within her power for only a short time, yet at this moment had him so much within her power that he was insisting upon his mother committing an offense—perhaps an unpardonable offense—against the hundreds of persons whom she was to receive as guests on that evening.

She decided that she would know for herself.

Turning to her son, she said: "Reginald, I trust you. You know what it means to invite an unknown person into our set. Now I give you permission to carry out your desire, and I trust we shall not be disappointed in the woman."

She handed him an invitation, which he took, saying that he would see she got it.

"But remember, my son," Lady Trent went on, "that this Madame Nitolsk is to enjoy the hospitality of your mother, and remember, too, my brave boy, that your mother would rather die than bid to her home a woman whose character would not bear the searchlight of virtue and of honor. I know you, my darling child, but I do not know whether I can trust your judgment in this matter."

"Mother, I thank you, and I feel sure you will have no cause for regrets."

He took the invitation, but he did not look at it. He caught his mother's hand and pressed it to his lips. Then he straightened himself and a smile lit up the strong-set face, as his eyes met those of his mother, for she was smiling tenderly upon him. Then he turned and left the room.



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Lady Trent looked after her son, and a feeling of tenderest pride mingled itself with compassion. He looked so handsome and so brave in his beautiful uniform, with the insignia of his rank—"God bless you and keep you, my son."

She listened to his footsteps as they grew fainter and fainter down the long corridor, and the mother's ear caught the small metallic click of the sword, which touched the mosaic pavement every now and then. The smile had left her face and an anxious look was in her eyes.

Though her son resembled her in some features, no one would have judged their relation by physiognomy alone.

Her hair was a light brown, softly parted and done high on the head. The complexion was clear, as it generally is with English women, and the healthy pink of the cheek and the crystal blue of the eye made her appear much younger than she really was. The features were of a refined, classic type, and were in perfect harmony with the noble lines of the chin and throat. Her face showed decision and sincerity of purpose, though kind and always open to reason. She was large, but not stout, and she carried herself with a regal bearing. She possessed that noble beauty which can not fail to make a goddess of woman, especially if she has passed the years of forty, and Lady Trent was just nine-and-forty. Some half-hour after Lieutenant Trent had gone out from his mother's sitting room she was entering her electric landau.

"Go directly to *Revillon*, Rue de Rivoli," said Lady Trent to the footman, who stood awaiting her orders.

She was having a large sealskin coat made there, and remained at this furrier's long enough to allow the fitter to examine the fit of the completed garment, something she always did before permitting the sending home.

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On returning to her automobile she gave orders for her usual morning drive, which, when in Paris, she always took in the Bois.

On the return trip, while yet in the Bois, as the automobile sped off the Allée de la Reine Marguerite, on the beautiful Route de Suresnes, a couple of riders came into view.

The horses were walking and evidently the riders were thoroughly enjoying the interesting chat, in which the woman was displaying her abilities in that line, for her vivacity of manner was very apparent at even a distance. Her companion was in the attitude of an adoring listener. Quick as a flash to Lady Trent was made known the fact that her son, Reginald Trent, was enslaved by the woman with whom at that moment he rode and held converse.

The chauffeur and footman, recognizing the son of Lady Trent, ran along quietly and slowly, expecting an order to stop.

Lieutenant Trent, who had turned his head at sound of the approaching car, turned in his saddle to signal the chauffeur to stop.

He dismounted, and, saluting his mother, for whom the footman was holding open the door, said: "Mother, you will allow me the honor to present to you my friend, Madame Nitolsk."

Madame Nitolsk, whose horse had remained standing near by, now turned her horse's head and came close.

Lady Trent bowed kindly and gave no indication other than that she was much pleased with the woman. But in reality she felt it her duty to warn her son at the earliest opportunity to avoid as much as possible this strange woman—this woman who belonged not to the order of women found in the home of Lady Trent.

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Lady Trent rarely made mistakes in her judgments, according to first impressions of persons who were presented for her approval.

Madame Nitolsk, though seated in her beautiful saddle, upon an extraordinarily spirited horse, made a most beautiful picture, as with reins in left hand and dainty little riding whip in left, she bowed very low to Lady Trent.

To the son she was most dangerously fascinating; to the mother she was a picture of the most fascinating treachery that she could remember to have yet encountered. She felt no slight compunction of conscience at the thought of this woman mingling with her guests of the evening—guests, every one of whom trusted in the wholesome English woman's unbiased judgment so fully that to meet one in her *salons* was understood to meet a morally good woman.

Lady Trent knew the position she held in the esteem of her friends, but she had given her son permission to invite this Madame Nitolsk, and she would abide by that decision.

The landau carrying the guardian angel of Lieutenant Trent passed out of sight.

The two riders continued on their way.

"You do not resemble your mother," remarked Madame Nitolsk."

"No, I am favored with the face, form and manners of my maternal grandfather."

"You are something like your mother, I see."

"How so?" he asked.

"Ah, she is a brave woman, and her son is a daring soldier. I always admire that brave nobility in woman; but in man—ah!"

The "ah" was said with a bewitching shrug of the shoulders and a smile played around her mouth. She

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looked down, and the sweet, low voice was deeper, sweeter, keener—it went to the point.

Trent understood all it implied, but he wanted to hear her say it.

“You dislike daring in men?” he interrogated.

As she turned quickly upon him, her large, luminous eyes lit by the intensity of her passion, she exclaimed, “I adore it in men.”

They left the Suresnes and were now nearing the gate.

“I am afraid,” said he, with a thoughtful shake of the head, “I am afraid you would not like the life of a brave man as much as you admire it.”

She made no answer, for she was revolving within that subtle mind, so capacious in matters of a designing nature, just how she might best convince Alverstone that Lieutenant Trent and the young American singer were betrothed, for she told herself that this young woman was more than likely the cause of the coldness which Alverstone had shown her on last evening after the opera. She understood that he was totally indifferent to her, and, further, that he was glad Lieutenant Trent and she had been so busy with themselves. Yes, and she had seen, too, that he had been the one to tuck in the wraps of this same American beauty before the landau had left the Opéra.

At her earliest opportunity she would make Alverstone afraid to notice this young woman.

Trent adored Madame Nitolsk, for he thought she was lost in a delicious reverie of himself, while in reality she cared nothing more for Trent than she did for any servant of any color who might serve her in gaining a desired object.

Her head turned a little, though she did not look at him. There was an ugly light in her eyes, for ugly

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thoughts of Julia Pembroke flit through her mind; but Trent did not see this, for he was looking at her lithe, graceful form.

"You do not know me," she said, and she bent gently toward him, as if the whispered words might be audible to a passer-by. Something tinkled on the hard ground. Trent, so deeply absorbed in the mysteries of that subtle something emanating from the personality of that most subtle of women, heard nothing.

"What was that?" she asked. "It sounded like gold—like a ten-franc piece," she added, in tones of great wonderment.

"What is what?" asked Trent, in answer. "I heard nothing," he went on, slowly emerging from a peculiar abstraction.

Instantly Madame Nitolsk turned her horse, and, pointing toward a spot with her dainty little whip, said: "Ah, there! see! it is mine—a trinket. I dropped it."

Quickly dismounting, Trent picked up the tiny ornament—a dainty little lyre of gold, set with three tiny diamonds. He examined it, saying: "Very unique, indeed, my dear Madame."

"It pleases you, does it?" she asked. "Keep it, in remembrance of me," and she pushed back the hand which offered it.

"Oh! Madame! Madame!"—

She stopped him by asking: "You like me a little?"

The question was begging, but the tone was triumphant. Trent, who, on approaching Madame Nitolsk to restore the lost ornament, had thrust his arm through the rein of his horse, had both hands free. He seized the little hand in both of his and fiercely clasped it in his own, then pressed it to his lips passionately, saying: "I love you, I love you, Madame Nitolsk."

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She smiled down upon him, then almost closed her eyes, as if she wished to stamp upon her memory a pleasing conquest, a cunning stroke. She made no answer, but her dark skin changed color—it became a deep red.

The sound of an approaching carriage was heard. Trent mounted his horse and they rode away under the gates, on out of the Bois, and cantered off along the Avenue du Bois de Boulogne, the admired of all who saw them, for to see them was to notice, then admire; and many were the heads turned to admire the handsome English officer and his beautiful companion, who, in her soft, dark green velvet habit, with its trimmings of gold lace—all of the latest mode—was a striking beauty.

Her wicked character was as perfectly concealed beneath the rich velvets as are the claws of a cat under the soft velvet paw.

"You will not forget to come this evening?" said Trent, as he was about to leave her.

"Thank you; I assure you I shall not forget," she made answer. Then she rode in under the big doors of her mansion, and they closed immediately.

Trent went off, putting his horse to a brisk gallop. As he came out of a side street, intending to cross Champs Elysées, on his way to Rue Marbeuf, he drew rein, for the crowded avenue was not then passable. Just as the police were making a halt in the line coursing up Champs Elysées and his horse had started forward, he saw Julia passing on the sidewalk behind him. She saw him and bowed. He returned the compliment with his most gracious salute. Many turned to see who was so highly favored.

Though Trent's mind was filled with images of Madame Nitolsk—images of the various poses taken by her during the saunter in the Bois—he was not insen-

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sible to the charms of the fresh young American girl, who at that moment had given him as fresh and as morally healthy a smile as had been the bow and smile of Madame Nitolsk morally unhealthy and degrading.

He thought: "How different from Madame Nitolsk is the beautiful American! Each has a charm for me, but"— Here his thought was crushed with the emotion which thought of Madame Nitolsk, in her sinuous seductiveness, aroused.

Trent should have seen that Julia Pembroke was capable of no deceit—that she would plan no evil deed; while he should also have seen that Madame Nitolsk had made him as the rabbit when the prey of a boa constrictor—stupefied. And had she chosen to do so, she would have carried to a finish the serpentine propensity.

When Trent had put out his hand to give Madame Nitolsk the lyre she sat upon her magnificent horse, with every coil of the boa perfectly visible in her every motion and in every glance of her glittering eyes.

Will Trent be wise? Only his blood can decide. What of his blood? That is, as it has been tended and nurtured for a generation, or for generations—the longer the rose is cultivated the farther it goes from the wild nature in which it was first found. Just so with the blood of a person or a family.

Though Trent might be captivated for the moment, his was a fine lineage, and he was less likely to fall into the snare set by the "strange woman" than he would have been had the mothers of their long line of splendid English ancestors been less wisely chosen. It was with pardonable pride that the Trents kept a special gallery, in which were hung the portraits of the ancestors, upon either side of a corridor, through which one might walk and look upon women who never thought an evil deed, much less planned or committed one.

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As Trent was about to turn into the stables he saw Alverstone coming in his direction. He stopped and waited until he came up.

"Hello, Alverstone! Find any more Apaches?"

"No, no more Apaches; but I am on my way to visit our Apache victim of last night."

"How thoughtful you are," replied Trent. "Give him my best wishes for a speedy recovery."

"I shall do so. You don't look like the Apaches had troubled you this morning."

"No, indeed," Trent made answer, with great emphasis. "I have been out riding some two hours or more."

"You have a fine color and a clear eye. The air must be more than invigorating where you rode. Think I'll take a turn there to-morrow, if you will disclose this 'Fountain of Youth.'"

"Ha! ha! ha!" laughed Trent, well knowing the real cause of his bright eye. "I was riding in the Bois, mostly on Route de Suresnes," and then he laughed again.

Had Alverstone known the danger he would there encounter, in the person of Madame Nitolsk, he would shun that entire quarter of the Bois and enjoy his morning canter in another part of the great park; for Alverstone cared nothing at all for women of Madame Nitolsk's order—women incapacitated to entertain the masculine sex, except by means most seductive—seductive in varying degrees of seductiveness, according as the victim is easy or difficult of destruction.

"Don't forget the reception this evening, Alverstone. Miss Pembroke will be there," said Trent, as Alverstone started to go on his way, but he got no reply, for Alverstone did not turn around.



## CHAPTER VII.

As Alverstone walked on he felt not a little displeasure at the familiar manner in which Trent had spoken of Miss Pembroke; especially since he had known her but two days. Alverstone was enough judge of human nature to know that the indiscretion lay entirely with Trent. He required no other recommendation of Julia Pembroke's character than that given him at finding her an accepted and respected guest of Lady Trent; for to see Lady Trent was to know that she was not outbidden in the price she required as entrance fee to her circle of personal friends.

By this time Alverstone had crossed Champs Elysées, and wisely concluded that Trent was a soldier, and had fought well and bravely; that it was narrow and uncharitable to wish a daring man to be at all times a delicate one.

He took out a card to make sure of the name of the street. He remembered the number distinctly.

Yes, it was Rue du Général Foy. He walked on quite rapidly now, for he had yet quite a distance to go.

He found an automatic lift at the entrance, but Alverstone feared them, having had narrow escapes from serious accidents in them on several occasions. He chose to climb the steps.

While standing on the fourth landing to take a little rest, he mused that this man must be poor to live so high, for he had been directed to the fifth floor.

However, a liveried domestic answered his ring and led him into a very elegantly furnished drawing-room, in which Etienne Neveré, the injured man, was seated.

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As the man bent forward to receive his visitor more cordially Alverstone saw in his face an expression of pain. Going quickly to his side, Alverstone said: "I beg of you do not exert yourself. You are better, I see."

"Yes, I am, thank you. Be seated here, please, close to me, where we can have a little talk," said Nevere, laying his hand on an easy-chair near him.

Etienne Nevere was a man of some fifty-five years. He was of medium height, neat in dress and general appearance, strongly built, but refined withal. The short, black beard was trimmed to a point. The hair was black, thick and smoothly dressed. The skin was dark, with a slight pallor. The eyes were small, keen, intelligent, though not striking. He had an artist's odd way of squinting the eyes, which made them seem smaller than they really were. The nose was strong and prominent and marked to a degree with the Parisian irregularity. The hands were small, white and effeminately molded. He had an easy air, combined with a certain nervous alertness.

"Thank you," said Alverstone, accepting the proffered seat.

"That Apache's stick might have ended my life," began Nevere. "Had you not frightened him, I think I should not now be alive. By the way, who was the young man who assisted me out of the drug store?"

"That," replied Alverstone, "was Lieutenant Trent, an English officer, visiting Paris on his way from India to London. He sends his best wishes for your speedy recovery, and hopes to visit you to-morrow."

"Thank you, thank you; that is very kind, very considerate of you both. I was fortunate that you passed my way at that hour—truly fortunate."

And Nevere shuddered at the remembrance of the attack. "These poor cabmen," continued Nevere, "afford

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no protection against the deadly aim of these ruffians. They are afraid to look at them, well knowing it may cost life."

I have been quite fortunate in that respect," answered Alverstone. He paused a moment. Nevere said nothing, and Alverstone went on:

"Lieutenant Trent and I were on our way from the Opéra—indirectly, however, as we had sipped our wine at the Café de la Paix"—

"Café de la Paix!" ejaculated Nevere. "I had left there but a very short time before. Strikes me I recall seeing you, at a table near by, where I sat with a friend and his wife."

"Was that you who entered the café with that handsome brunette in the lemon velvet?" asked Alverstone, in enquiring surprise.

"Yes, yes, that was I. She is the wife of the attorney La Blanche, and that was he at the table when we entered."

"I remember well," said Alverstone.

"A few minutes before you found me," continued Nevere, "the victim of that Apache, I had left Attorney La Blanche and Madame La Blanche at their door. We often walk home from the Opéra together. They are extreme devotees of that art. By the way, Monsieur Alverstone, are you fond of the opera?" he asked.

"Very, very fond, indeed, sir."

"Are you a musician, then?"

"No," answered Alverstone; "not exactly that; not to the extent of the performance. I am a great lover of the art, when performed by others."

"Do you attend opera much?"

"Yes, whenever I am in a city where opera is given I attend."

"Ah, you do not live in Paris?"

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"No, this is not my home. I am an American—New York is my home. I am a sojourner—a traveler—anything you will. I am seeing the world," replied Alverstone.

"Well! well! you an American! I thought you were a Frenchman!"

"Ha! ha!" laughed Alverstone. "Now you compliment me."

"But you speak French without an accent," objected Nevere. "You must have spent much time in France to do this."

"Yes, I have been in France a number of years. I was brought here to study when I was twelve. Since then I have crossed the Atlantic many times. Now I have given you a sketch of my life, may I ask if I am correct when I think you a Frenchman?"

"Yes, indeed; you are right there. I am a Frenchman, a true Parisian—born in Paris, lived in Paris and will die in Paris. No place in the world for me like Paris." After a moment's pause he concluded: "I am a musician—a flutist at the Opéra."

"A flutist! a musician!" exclaimed Alverstone, in evident surprise.

"Yes, I am; nothing strange in that, is there?"

"Yes, to me it is strange."

"Why?"

"I had taken you to be an artist—a painter—a delineator of character."

"You are the first stranger to read me an artist," replied Nevere. "I generally pass for a musician. How came you to judge me a painter?"

"I can only say," answered Alverstone, "that you appear the artist-painter—portrait painter."

"You must have some strength in that line yourself, to be so excellent a judge," said Nevere. "If you have

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time," he went on, "we will look in at one of my rooms."

Nevere opened the little door at the end of the hall and pushed back the crimson curtains, "saying: "This way, please."

Alverstone was totally unprepared for the sight which met his view. He found himself standing in the midst of a capacious and perfectly equipped atelier. The room was two stories in height, and vaulted, and the entire back was of glass. As the back faced the south and looked out upon a large garden, a flood of warm sunshine illumined the room at all hours of the day. Across this glass end were hung many rich curtains, each of a different shade.

These curtains the artist adjusted to obtain the desired light upon his model. Two beautiful divans stood across opposite corners of the room. Cushions and draperies were seen in the most extravagant profusion, and of such beauty and workmanship as would give exquisite delight to the most exacting connoisseur of that art. Against the wall, directly opposite the window, was a large, magnificent throne of crimson velvet and gold. The canopy of the throne was hung with deep gilt fringe, the effect ensemble being that one stood in the presence of royalty.

All around the room stood easels, upon each of which was placed a portrait unframed and in some stage of development.

Since entering the studio Alverstone had stood dumfounded. He had not moved a muscle. The artist spoke and broke the spell.

"You are surprised at my little studio?"

"No, I am not surprised," replied Alverstone. "Surprised is not the word—I am amazed. You are a great artist, I see."

Then he walked toward the portrait of a Cardinal

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well known in Europe. The Cardinal was seated in a large chair, and the artist having completed the work in charcoal, had painted the head, the neck and a small portion of one shoulder.

"You make his excellency the Cardinal do duty in paint as well as in life," said Alverstone, smiling. "I see his eyes find me at whatever angle. He is in truth omnipresent."

Then Alverstone walked back and forth in front of the portrait, saying: "This is fine, fine, indeed! You are a great artist, I know."

Nevere said nothing; he only smiled a satisfaction in the delight of his guest. Then he took up a long pole, used for adjusting the different curtains on as many different rods across the window, and pushed back all the curtains except a pair of delicate white silk ones. These he drew together so as to exclude every ray of the glaring sunlight, which at that hour of the day was very powerful—almost blinding."

"I will show you something else," said the artist. "I will show you what I think is my best. I have just varnished it, and in that state of development I never leave a portrait in this room. Now, if you will kindly excuse me, I will go and fetch it."

Alverstone, still looking at the speaking countenance of the Cardinal, turned toward Nevere, saying: "I can not see how any one could produce a portrait finer than this. If it is true that this is not your best, I assure you I am glad that you have told me this before you introduced your masterpiece."

Nevere disappeared. Alverstone looked around at other portraits. He understood why Nevere lived so high up. He recognized one portrait as that of a cabinet minister whose unfortunate convictions and eloquent discourses had made him resign his office. Another, as

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that of a society woman whom Paris had known for three seasons, and who would, no doubt, to all outward appearance, be one of its leaders for many seasons to come. And, too, there were certain men of genius, whose long hair and lean, strong-set faces gave them their badge of distinction.

Nevere quickly returned, carrying in his arms a large, unframed canvas, keeping the back toward Alverstone. He placed it upon an easel, where he knew the light was best.

Alverstone at once recognized the woman whose beauty had attracted Lieutenant Trent at the Café de la Paix.

"There, that is my best. You recognize her?" inquired Nevere.

"Yes," answered Alverstone, quickly; "she is the lady who entered the café with you last evening."

"It is she," said Nevere; "Madame La Blanche, the attorney's wife, of whom I spoke."

"That is surely perfect," said Alverstone.

The artist said nothing, only stood smiling, lost in contemplation of his work, that, to him, represented the best of which his talent was capable.

"You are a genius. You will place this portrait in the Salon next season, will you not?"

"If Madame permits, I shall do so."

The portrait represented Madame La Blanche seated and taken three-quarter size. The arms and neck bare, only a small strap across the shoulders. The dress fit very close to the figure. The chest was high and the waist tapered gracefully, according to the French notion of a fashionable waist line. The dress, of lemon-colored velvet, contrasted well with the dark beauty of the hair and eyes. A diamond dog collar clasped around her throat. She was seated upon a dainty mahogany chair,

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one arm of which was obliterated by suitable draperies; the other arm of the chair, which was hidden from sight by three small cushions, gave sufficient support for the right arm, which rested there in graceful harmony with the position of the body and the poise of the head.

Alverstone could find nothing so strikingly beautiful in the form or the face of the model, for she was that fastidiously fashionable beauty which social Paris adores. But the way the light caught the rich lemon velvet at the round of the folds and chased the shadows into its hollows was bewitching.

Upon the velvet festooned across the chest were odd lights and shadows. They did not come from a general light, for they were too small and seemed to quiver. They were the small reflections cast from the diamonds worn at her throat.

"Come," said Nevere, going toward a divan; "come, let us be seated here and take this view of the portrait."

Alverstone accepted the seat, remarking as he did so: "You must be very fond of music to obligate yourself to the discharge of the daily duties devolving upon a flutist at the Opéra."

"Every one says that, but the cause of my devotion to my flute is a very long tale," and he stared toward the canvas, but his eyes looked over it, as though they peered into some dark corner. Then, after a moment's silence, he continued: "I like you, my young man, and if you have time and care to listen, I will tell you my story."

"I have time, and I am pleased to be privileged to listen to words from so great a genius as I find here, in the person of Etienne Nevere."

"Thank you," said Nevere, smiling faintly; "you are very kind, my friend," he went on, "for such you are. Let us have a smoke."

And in preparation he opened a rose-pearl cigarette



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case, which lay upon the little stand near him.

"No doubt yours are the best, but I have here a cigarette which I would like you to try first," said Alverstone, as he took from his pocket the little jeweled cigarette case which he always carried with him.

They smoked Alverstone's first, and then Nevere's, then Alverstone's again before they left the studio.

There was a long time that neither spoke. They only smoked and looked vacantly at the slowly circling clouds of smoke, and strange, but not infrequent, these chance-made friends smoked regularly and in unison. And when the rings of visible exhalations had become so big that they vanished into the air of the room, the two men were still looking absently at the creation in the lemon-colored velvet.

"When I was a young man," began Nevere, "about your age, five-and-twenty, and a happy enthusiast in my studio, I had painted many persons of renown—some of great renown. Many of my pictures hung in the Salon. I had been awarded prizes—yes, I was happy—I was young, and, like you, I had never loved deeply."

He set his jaw. His eyes grew very small and fierce, and the tone rang hard and regretful.

Alverstone saw for the first time that Nevere was not such an easy, careless man as he had seemed at first.

"One day a young woman came into my studio. She was in company with a composer, at that time very celebrated, and for whom I was painting a portrait. He wished her to see the portrait, and she had come to stay through the sitting. She came but once—she remained forever. Do not start so, my friend; she is not here in person. She is here only in memory—in sacred, sacred memory.

"When the composer came for the next sitting I asked him who she was. He explained that she was a

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lyric soprano, who had just made her début at the Monnaie, Brussels, and was now singing in the Opera House here. I knew nothing of music, but had a naturally good tenor voice. I began the cultivation of my voice, choosing for my master a celebrity here in Paris. The master said: 'My boy, you have a fine voice, a promising one.' After three years of assiduous application I left, with my voice completely broken—ruined—lost beyond recovery. I have never since been able to sing a note. My physicians pronounced it a case of destruction of the vocal cords by gas, for at that time I used gas for lighting purposes. After that my master, who had been proud of my voice, told every member of his school the danger lurking in the use of gas, for gas entirely destroys the delicate velvet on the vocal cords.

"Then came two months of deep despair. The deeper it became the stronger grew my love. One day I chanced to see this idol of my heart conversing with a flutist. It was my hope. I decided at once to be a flutist. Then I would play for her. She would converse with me. My ecstasy became almost as wild as had been my despair. I entered heart and soul into the study of the flute. For it was my first love, as it is now, and I loved with my soul. Then came my engagement at the Opéra, where you see me now. Her engagement there expired at the end of my first year as flutist.

"In the years that followed she often came back, but only for a night at a time. Millions of the music-loving portion of the large cities have listened to the wealth of glorious melody which she has poured forth upon them, while I—I—have remained a stationary flutist, in order that on each return of my beautiful singer I may at least say a few words, and they are a very few at most. But, alas!" and a deep sigh escaped his well-drawn lips, "it was too late; she was married to an exacting creature—

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her art—I would not tell this to every one. No doubt you have heard this woman sing. She was *Queen Marguerite* in 'Les Huguenots' last night."

Alverstone started, and a smothered cry escaped him.

"Yes, she is Madame Cinati," explained Nevere, in a resigned tone. "It is a dreadful thing, my friend, to love a singer—a serious singer.

"Beware! they are as beautiful as gems. They shine, they twinkle. Kings and people have spoiled them so. Nothing is rare or lovely to them. They are so cold."

Alverstone had grown so reflective that it was not the past story of a flutist, but the real one of a young life—his own—enacting itself upon its own plain.

"Beware! singers are cold." What hard words they were. Were they true? He could almost feel his heart beat. His face had changed. He did not see the change, but the painter did, and the story-teller, artist that he was, paused in his narrative to catch the lines.

Nevere understood why they were there. He had looked before into a mirror, when love had first tasted at his heart, and he remembered where and how the lines were drawn.

At last Alverstone awoke from his reverie, for the voice of his companion had changed. It was too shrewdly wise—as age when it laughs at the love of youth.

"You are in love, deeply in love. Whoever she may be, if she be a singer or artist-pupil—beware! and when she smiles sweetly or sings divinely, remember it is for her art—and it will always be thus. Beware! Beware!"

## CHAPTER VIII.

Some time before the evening, at the Hôtel Cecil in London, the Trents had sent out invitations for a *soirée et souper* to be given in Paris, at the mansion of Lady Trent's sister, the Princesse de Loire. It was in honor of their son, Sir Reginald Trent, to be Earl of Essexby, Lieutenant of the 23d Light Guard. Some hundreds of very congenial friends had been invited, and now on this Tuesday evening the guests were arriving almost ensemble, for every kind of carriage and automobile was seen in the long line, slowly taking its place in front of the mansion, in at the entrance of which hundreds of beautiful women and handsome men made their way.

Large, stately halls, spacious, gilded, mirrored *salons*, and vast, vaulted galleries had been thrown open and beautifully decorated for the occasion.

The immense conservatory was dimly lighted throughout, and amid its wilderness of tropical plants, many of them of the rarest species, and its profusion of delicately scented flowers banked on every side, were to be found many seats, along the labyrinthian ways which led through this delightful garden of beauty; and while some seats were in conspicuous places, others were less prominent, while some were entirely hidden from the eye of the casual observer, but easily found by the more or less inquisitive in search of a quiet chat with a friend. On every side was found evidence of the great wealth and exquisite taste of the owner of the mansion, and all who were so fortunate as to find themselves there were sure to remember the occasion as one of more than passing moment.

An army of servants in imposing livery was in attendance from the time the first carriage made the

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turn around the pink marble fountain in the great court and drew rein before the massive stone arch of the main entrance way, until it rolled away again and the heavy outside gates closed behind it. These very self-important personages can add much to the beauty of a scene, if they wish to do so, and in the mansion of the Princesse de Loire all was dignity, grace, beauty; for the servant etiquette was a severe code, and all knew it and obeyed it.

Everywhere one found the arrangement perfect and magnificent. Some of those invited were there because it was the fashion in their social circle; others, out of curiosity; some, for political reasons, and still others because of the matrimonial possibilities with the young English officer, Reginald Trent, in whose honor the evening was given; but many, because they loved the noble Lady Trent and approved of the life and character of herself and of her honorable husband, Lord Trent.

Among the large number of distinguished guests of the hour were many from the artistic world—painters, sculptors, musicians, composers; and, too, there were statesmen, men of letters, naval officers, soldiers, besides quite a number of Americans, renowned for their wealth or artistic abilities; and, of course, there were many from the high titled aristocracy of both England and the Continent.

In most instances each gentleman was accompanied by the ladies of his family, in sufficient number at least to give a tone of brilliance and gaiety; to which, when was added the bright uniforms of the soldiers and officers, the scene became one of superb grandeur, as well as one of bright, sparkling, enjoyable intercourse.

For, as every one knows, there is nothing so surely predicts the success of an evening as diversity of taste among the guests.

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Outside the moon hung high up over Napoleon's *Arc de Triomphe*—a silver boat, with both horns horizontal and pointing northeast and southwest. It dipped and floated and dipped again through the large fleecy clouds chasing rapidly across the deep blue of the midnight sky; for the clock had just passed the eleventh hour of the night before the last carriage bearing the invited guests had arrived.

Here, there, everywhere, were seen little groups chatting gaily the while in bits of lively conversation or promenading in couples, through the spacious halls and *salons*; some stopping now and then to enjoy with some group or couple the flashes of wit or humor flung out and parried by the brilliant contestants for the honor of supremacy in the battle, then flitting on again to join some other interesting group, until the whole resplendent throng reflected the dazzling brilliancy of a restless sunlit sea.

In all this happy world of ceaseless activity there was at least one incongenial soul—one who seemed to seek in vain for some one or something. This was an individual who, after a turn of all the galleries, *salons* and recesses, took a position in the first *salon*, behind a bank closely built of tall ferns. From this point it was easy for him to see the faces of those who came to pay their respects to Lord and Lady Trent and their son, Lieutenant Trent, at the head of the receiving line. He had not long to wait, for soon from the depths of his retreat he heard approaching footsteps that told of a duty yet unperformed.

Peering through the interlocking fern fronds he saw—oh! yes, he saw the face of the young woman who alone could still the tumult within his soul. Did he see Madame Cinati? No, though she was there, radiant in her loveli-

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ness. She was handsomely gowned in bright pink, which, with her diamond tiara, gave one the impression of a beautiful rose crowned with a dewdrop tiara sparkling brilliantly and reflecting the prismatic colors in scintillating profusion; and besides this fascination of outward appearance, a world-renowned prima donna always radiates from depths of hidden resources a strength—her greatest power; and in this characteristic Madami Cinati had no superior, for she was one of those singers who are known to the entire civilized world as noble women, whose hearts as well as voices are divinely inspired to do good wherever God, in His unerring wisdom, leads their steps or guides as a bird, from clime to clime, their certain flight.

Such persons are not to be compared with ordinary mortals, but are like unto some king, leader of men, poet, priest or prophet, who rises up from the mass, absorbing and representing the thoughts, feelings, purposes, sentiments of a generation of men or a race of people.

But Hampton Alverstone saw not Madame Cinati, nor even heard the crystalline quality of her voice, for there was admitted to his mind's eye but the one image, and that was of the woman for whom he had searched since his arrival, and about whose coming he had begun to have a shade of doubt.

Now she was here, and would he let beauty, fascination, power, any commendable qualification attributable to cultivated humanity, snatch from him one moment of the exquisite joy—joy akin to pain—he felt at seeing her!

His eyes followed them as, after due ceremony, they left the receiving line, passing down the way that all graciously accorded them, for to most of those assembled Madame Cinati was a personal friend; and on this occasion her vivacious manner, as she turned on this side and

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on that to acknowledge the homage all vied with one another in paying her, was most charming. The warm smiles of her fine, sensitive mouth played hide and seek with the happy lights constantly seen in her large brown eyes, and were changeful only to suit each particular person or persons with whom she paused for a moment.

Julia was beside her and presented a picture of charming simplicity in her white dress of exquisite *crêpe de Chine*. She wore no jewels except a small string of pearls clasped around her neck, and carried only a dainty little fan. She was in pleasing contrast with the great, brilliant, captivating Madame Cinati.

Alverstone tried to get near them by going directly through the grand *salon*, but owing to the nearness of the receiving line, where guests always linger in crowding parties, he soon saw that this was not easy. He decided to pass through an adjoining *salon* and come out at the farther end, where he would meet them in their course down the first *salon*.

When nearing the tediously sought door—for in this *salon* there were many guests as well—he saw Madame Nitolsk, at some little distance, coming toward him, as fast as she could make her way through the groups and promenaders. But before she had approached near enough to attract his attention, Alverstone at once affected total ignorance of her presence and abruptly turned and quickly lost himself in the thickest of the crowd. After quite a little struggle on his part—for he had held himself to the midst of the crowd, wishing to remain perfectly concealed from Madame Nitolsk, he found himself through the door he had at first tried to gain and in the second *salon*.

But this had taken him longer than he had expected, and as he scanned the faces of the many groups about him he could not see Julia's face nor that of Madame



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Cinati. Suddenly a sweet crystalline voice just behind made him turn. It was Madame Cinati. She was conversing with the Austrian Ambassador and the wife of an English General; but Alverstone had never had the honor of a personal friendship with Madame Cinati, so continued on a short distance farther.

Here he found Julia seated and conversing with an Italian Prince and the Spanish Ambassador, both of whom she engaged in a very lively conversation.

As he came up behind them, this being the only avenue of approach, he heard her clear voice, now speaking in the beautiful language of Tasso with the Italian Prince and in the polite language of the French with the Spanish Minister. Alverstone could not speak from the position in which, for the near present at least, he was forced to remain.

He could wait, though—he was content, for he was near. He was not jealous of the Prince, and the Spanish Minister was the husband of the lady just a few steps before him, who just then was having an animated conversation with a literary man, whom Alverstone knew as a noted American writer—a novelist.

He could not help hearing the comments upon the subject of music which passed between Julia and her two companions, and he was proud to know that his young countrywoman was fully capable of continuing at some length the conversation, which it was very evident had not been engaged in for the sake of ceremony alone—and with such men, for both were, first and foremost, fiercely interested in all that pertained to statesmanship, and were not often held for long upon a subject not either directly or indirectly touching upon a question of state.

Finally Alverstone succeeded in stepping around and in front of the three.

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Julia at once put out her hand, saying: "Good evening, Mr. Alverstone; I am very glad to see you."

"Thank you; I have been close behind you for some little time. I could not help hearing your lively discussion."

"You are fond of music?" said the Prince, with an interrogation in his voice.

"Ah, very, Prince; very, very."

"This is a fine place to be, then, for we are to have an excellent program this evening," asserted the Spanish Minister.

"And it is to be rendered by the best talent in the world," said the American Ambassador, who had come up just when the Minister had begun to speak.

Julia looked up at Alverstone and smiled. He smiled back at her, saying: "We are all artists—not all artists as to the performance, but I think I can say in truthfulness that we are all artist-listeners."

"Ah, ha! my countryman; that is well put," said the American Ambassador, patting Alverstone on the shoulder in fatherly fashion. "I had not thought of it in that light, but I often wondered what position I did hold in the musical world. Now I see; I play no instrument and I sing only the simplest melodies, but now I see I am an artist-listener, for I could listen without ceasing to the great artists of song and of instrumentation."

This the Ambassador gave to his auditors with no little bit of eloquence, for he had always been especially gifted in holding attentions, and on this occasion he had the added good fortune of speaking to gentlemen of European cultivation, and every one knows what that means.

Then all smiled and assented to the declaration of the American, and then their eyes followed in the direction

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indicated by the Prince, who said: "Now, there is one who will exhaust every resource of all who are able to listen to his art."

"Ah!" said Julia; "you refer to the pianist?"

"Yes, it is he," replied the Prince; "he is on the program this evening."

"Monsieur Dedireaux is great—great—great," said Julia, thoughtfully, shaking her head, while pronouncing the adjective thrice and very slowly, as if she were under the spell of some of Monsieur Dedireaux's inspirations upon the piano.

The American Ambassador here addressed himself to Madame Cinati, who had just come up, saying: "My dear Madame Cinati, allow me to thank you for the very kind protection you have given my little American girl, Miss Pembroke."

"Ah, kind sir," replied Madame Cinati, "I beg of you desist. Miss Pembroke is a true American girl, consequently quite capable of protecting herself. Beyond a little advice, I assure you she has required no attention from me. My dear sir, your country produces much gold, much financial wealth, but, what is of vastly greater importance to any nation, your country is filled with self-reliant women—both young and old."

She paused, and, elevating her eyebrows, smiled with lips slightly parted and looked into his face with a questioning expression, which seemed to ask, "True, is it not?" And then she looked at Julia, who had attracted her by a pretty little aspirated ha! ha!

"Thank you, thank you, Madame Cinati, in behalf of my countrywomen, I thank you. I know you speak from the sincerity of your heart. I am pleased to hear this eulogium from one who has visited all lands and who knows all the principal nations of the world."

"Ah, Prince, you here?" said a newcomer—a Count

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Dunkellsdorf, a German officer, in full dress uniform—addressing himself to the Prince. “But, pardon, I should have known that you were here.”

“Why should you know?” asked the Prince. “I might not have been so fortunate.”

“Aha! my Prince; I should expect you to be here for the reason that I just left Madame the Princesse.”

“Ah! did you? Where is she now?”

“About halfway up this *salon*, in company with some friends, and she is very happy.”

The Prince excused himself, saying that he wished to speak with his mother, and he, in company with the German officer, went away.

The American Ambassador and the Spanish Minister were lost to all but themselves, and were in danger, through an aberration of the brain, of going off into a very heated discussion over the Philippine question.

Alverstone had slipped into the seat left vacant by the departure of the Prince, and Julia and Alverstone were alone, for though in the grand *salon* of the mansion of the Prince de Loire, and in the midst of many hundreds of guests, they were entirely alone—alone—together—and for the first time in their lives.

But to have seen them sitting there, chatting quietly, with not the slightest sign of nervousness betrayed by either, and yet with nothing of the undue familiarity of the snobbish American, one could scarcely be induced to believe that this was their first meeting; yet it was, since the little time in the Opéra on the evening before had afforded no opportunity for such a delicious bit of a tête-à-tête as was this.

“Since coming, I have spent the entire time in looking for you,” observed Alverstone.

“Why, how can you say that, when all around you are the most attractive ladies and brave, handsome, wise

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and learned men?" and she laughed sweetly.

"I agree that you assert facts, but so do I when I say I have sought you and I have cared for no one else; for, Miss Pembroke, I have something of especial interest to say to you."

"To me?" she asked, with exclamatory effect.

"Yes, Miss Pembroke. I—I"—

"Oh! oh! pardon me, but that is Madame Cinati singing. Let us go to the music room."

The crowd in the *salon* had melted away unobserved by the happy pair. She arose and went quickly in the direction of the music room, followed by Alverstone.

They took chairs just inside the music room, but at a point from which they could see Madame Cinati, who was then singing the Bell Song from "*Lakmé*"—singing in all the beauty which the singing of that aria warrants.

Julia feasted her eyes upon Madame Cinati alone, and every emotion expressed by the prima donna found ready response within the soul of Julia. Her face registered the gain.

But Alverstone, seated a little back and to the left of Julia, could, without an unseemly display of his adoring spirit, look at Julia. He heard not the plaintive melody, nor the capricious flights of the simple Hindoo legend; nor did he hear that almost impossible *coloratura* passage—the fantastic tinkle of the tiny silver bell, with its lavish precipitous staccatos, its throbbing trills, its fluttering descents, its enrapturing roulades and its incessantly heedless consideration of cherished notes. He saw only Julia. Since that day near the master's he had known no peace of mind. He had followed her from afar, yet as close as he dare with consistency do so, and now she was here, beside him, and he could speak to her as much and as often as etiquette of the evening

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would permit; and she was pleased with him—this he could not help seeing. How could he? And if she did not hold him in the same regard in which he held her, at least her manner showed a pleased contentment in his attentions.

When Madame Cinati had finished singing and the hum, of voices lifted in compliment to the vocal powers of the singer, became general, Julia turned her large, liquid eyes upon Alverstone. He saw and read in their depths a verification of what he had been noting mentally. Yes, Julia Pembroke's eyes spoke the silent language of love. He believed he would ask her to promenade, but just then the great pianist took his seat and the piano was speaking soulfully to the assembled guests, who, listening breathlessly, seemed electrified under the spell produced by the contact of the fingers of the grand old pianist with the keys of the instrument, out through which he poured his soul.

To one whose ears have never known piano music beyond the thrum of the average performer, the wealth of sympathetic glory sent out from the magnetic fingers of the old genius could never be imagined.

When he had gone through all the soul-stirring movements of Beethoven's Sonata in C sharp minor, one certainly felt as did the blind girl, when Ludwig von Beethoven composed it and gave her, through the medium of that instrument upon which his fingers wrought, the sympathetic imagery of his soul—transmitting a full description of that beautiful moonlight night which her lately blinded eyes failed her in the seeing.

Julia again looked at Alverstone, but this time she looked for the effect of the beautiful sonata upon the musical sense of her friend. Yes, she saw he had been touched, and deeply, too. He did not seem to overcome

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his absorption, though the hum of voices was general as before, for his absorption was thorough.

Julia addressed him with the question, "You are fond of the Monsieur Dedireaux's art?"

"Ah, that is"—

"My dear Miss Pembroke," nervously exclaimed Lady Trent, suddenly breaking in upon them, "Madame la Princesse de Grancourt wishes to meet you." Then lowering her voice so that only Julia heard, she went on quickly: "Her son is a great friend of the impresario at Covent Garden, London, and the Princess herself is a great patron of your art."

"I have often heard of the Princesse de Grancourt," said Julia.

"Have you reference to the Duke de Grancourt?" asked Alverstone.

"You know him, do you?" inquired Lady Trent.

"Oh, yes; very well. I met him and the Duchess at Biarritz."

"How pleasant! You must meet him in Paris."

"Is he here now?" asked Alverstone.

"No, only the Princess is here; the Duke and Duchess are on the Riviera. They are like my brother and sister; they are afraid of the winters in Paris; but the Duke comes here soon to remain a few days."

"Ah, I see," returned Alverstone.

"Pardon, Monsieur Alverstone, but you will excuse us; the Princess is waiting."

Alverstone bowed his pleasure in granting Lady Trent's request, though inwardly he felt displeasure at losing Julia.

Lady Trent, with Julia on her arm, passed out of the music room.

Alverstone was recalled from his quiet musing by a cheery voice saying: "Why this deep absorption?"

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Alverstone turned. "Ah, Trent; I am music struck."  
Perhaps this was so. Who knows?

"Then let me introduce you to Madame Cinati," said Trent.

"I should be glad indeed to know her."

Madame Cinati received him cordially, greeting him as she always did Americans—as fortunate, indeed, that they were born in that glorious country, "the name of which," she said, "means opportunity."

Alverstone was much elated with the treatment shown him by Madame Cinati, for well he knew that the guardian of every beautiful voice jealously guards that voice and its possessor as well, from every possible danger, and danger may be scented in each new arrival within the circle of friends.

Madame Cinati had assisted Julia because she felt that she had found a star, and, in the words of a great teacher in Europe, Madame Cinati could say: "I am an artist; I care nothing for money."

"I think," said Madame Cinati, fastening her large brown eyes upon Alverstone, "you are one of my friends from beyond the Atlantic. Am I right?"

"Yes, Madame Cinati, I belong there; but I have spent much time on the Eastern Continent," answered Alverstone.

"You are not from Chicago, no?"

"No, I am a native of New York City."

"Ah! I love your beautiful city—I love your vast, vast land—I love its great free atmosphere—everything there is great."

"Thank you, Madame Cinati; I am glad you like my country. But you can not help liking our people, for they love you."

"Oh, yes, they love my art much. Excuse me, Mr. Alverstone," begged Madame Cinati, as she turned from



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Alverstone to the pianist, who had come up and unconsciously executed a delicately refined staccato movement upon her arm while he spoke.

"Dear Madame Cinati, you will do me the honor of this number—hear! The music is sounding, and I fain would tread the measures of the dance with you."

Madame Cinati laughed sweetly and said: "It is I who would be honored, my dear brother in art."

"No—no"—

"I beg pardon, Monsieur," said the deep voice of the Austrian Ambassador, interrupting the pianist; "but I think we have this number, do we not, Madame Cinati?"

Madame Cinati bowed assent, and, paying their respects to the old pianist, the two went off in the direction of the ballroom, leaving the old man, with the godlike head, looking after them, mentally pronouncing them a "noble pair," and wondering if he would prefer being a large and handsome man, like the great statesman, to being the little man of emaciation that he was, with the soul of a pianist, such as he felt himself to be and such as the world told him he was. And there were two very self-satisfied men there, for neither would be the other, if he could be.

While Alverstone had stood smiling at the group, he heard nothing of what they had said, for he had seen only Madame Cinati, and was lost to all but the love story which Etienne Nevere, the flutist and artist, had told him of himself and Madame Cinati. And Alverstone shuddered at the thought that a similar love story might be that of his own, with the difference that Julia Pembroke would be the heroine of the latter.

Alverstone's reverie had been broken off by the picture of Madame Cinati bowing her adieus to the admiring group around her, while to the old pianist she was making a most deferential courtesy.

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Their departure for the ballroom had made him recall that he had not made Julia his partner for this dance, so he turned to find her. He supposed she must be near, in this *salon*, where he had seen her with the Princesse de Grancourt, for whom she had left him.

Not seeing her in a general survey, he turned to go out of the *salon*, to make a further search, when a hand was laid on his arm in a manner that said, "Allow me to detain you."

He turned and looked into the eyes of Madame Nitolsk. He recoiled a little, but she did not see it. She looked more like a dream vision than a real person, and if she was a beautiful woman by daylight, to-night she was the most beautiful dark woman at the *soirée*. A creature that seemed to have been formed at night, in a magic moon-spell, under a starlit sky; for her step had stolen the silence of the night; her eyes had caught that soft reflection of the distant stars; her breath had sucked the perfume of the flowers; her movement had caught the rhythm of the wind, but her mind had gathered the narcotics of the night-dug plants. She was a very beautiful woman. Every one who saw her declared that.

She wore a rare creation of turquoise satin, spangled tulle and gold lace. The dress proper was tightly fit and of turquoise satin, and showed the round but delicate symmetry of the lithe form. There was a gold lace bodice that fit like a bolero over the deep chest. It had the form of two immense butterflies. And the fine gold of its threads was as delicate as the filament of a cobweb; from the end of this bolero hung the star-shot tulle. It covered the long court train, but it did not entirely hide the exquisite beauty of the shell-colored blue. This gauze cover did not fall over the front of the gown; it only came to the side of the bolero, for the

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costume was a mixture of two styles. It had a Princess front and an Empire back.

It was one of those creations which clings to all the sensuous curves of the form, yet half conceals them with some transparent yet misty fabric, which makes the hidden curve thrice lovelier than it really is.

The entire tulle cover was sewed with Oriental pearls, and here and there it was caught with rubies. The dress came to a point at both front and back, and the pretty curve of the full shoulders and the smooth perfection of the chest were exposed. The shapely arms were also bare, and a band of dull gold, encrusted all over with rubies, encircled one arm just above the elbow, and there were also many jeweled rings which adorned her small fingers. She wore a ruby plastron which covered the entire front of the bodice. The red of the gems matched well with the beauty of the skin, for Madame Nitolsk was a very dark woman. Her skin had that deep olive tinge which makes the eyes larger and more lustrous than they really are. Her hair was blue black, straight and very soft. It did not have a mourning sheen as hair of that color often has, for when she stood where a soft light fell on it, which she often did, there was a burnished shimmering all over it. But whatever this light came from, it enhanced her loveliness, and she knew it. It gave warmth to the colorless cheek, and it seemed to light lamps in her languorous eyes, which the heavy, curving lashes so often almost concealed.

They were large eyes, with dull black orbs that hung heavily from their lids. They had many expressions. They often were inert and oppressively steady, but more often they were restless and seemed searching for something.

The nose was small, straight, delicate, and the nostrils were sensitive and high-bred.

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Her mouth was small and finely cut, though the lower lip was fuller at the middle than would follow in proportion to its upper.

There was nothing in part striking about this beautiful face—it was too perfect.

A La Vallière was around her throat, and half cut the sinuous forward turn of the neck where it joined the body.

The marked level brow, the placid forehead, the roundness of the small chin on either side of the point, where it should have been oval, showed the fierce, sullen determination of her nature.

She was about medium height, but the winding grace of her movements and the cautiousness of her gait made her appear taller than she really was. There was fascination in the walk; there was captivation in the form and features, and there was allurements in the sweet, low voice.

Often the deep color would rise to her cheek, and the salmon of her lips would become a creamy pink and the heavy orbs would dilate. But this was rarely. This was when vital emotions stirred her, and the world never guessed these great interior tempests.

She was a masker, for ever since she had entered her teens jealousy had come as an echo to the voice of love, and she was now five-and-twenty. She was a cunning, artful creature—a brain capable of dark deeds and willing to perpetrate them; a soulless beauty; a flower of the Datura.

She took him coquettishly by the arm, and with a lithe, sinuous motion, bent her head in front of him, so that the large black eyes flashed the fire of her desire fully into his sickened soul.

"You are not dancing," she began, importunately; "I

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am not dancing." Then, after a moment's pause, she added: "Why not?"

There was another pause, and then the deep, sweet voice went on again, and there was a silver ripple in its rhythm.

"Let us join the happy dancers."

Alverstone had no excuse, aside from a flat refusal, and this he was far too gentlemanly to offer; so they went and were soon whirling as though all was joyous and bright with this Hampton Alverstone and his clinging partner of the waltz.

Several times during the dance Alverstone saw Julia and Trent. They made a beautiful picture—the fair-haired creature in her dress of spotless purity, while Lieutenant Trent, in his gay uniform, which added much to the well-disciplined body, looked a bulwark of protection for innocence so angelic. How could Trent but adore her! Yes, those eyes of his were filled with something more than friendly regard, but Alverstone could not find fault with Trent, for to Alverstone she was the most superior of women, and any good man would be likely to know this.

Once as they flit by him he saw a happy light in Julia's eye when she looked over the shoulder of Lieutenant Trent at him. She had smiled at Alverstone, but for an instant, for the glide of the mazy waltz had carried her away into the whirl of dancers, off out of sight of the man to whose existence she had become a necessity.

How strange are the immutable complexities attendant upon life!

He had given her only a glance, but in that most wonderful thing in the world—a glance—she had seen his soul's outpouring for her—to her.

No, he could not think of Julia Pembroke as the wife of any one but of himself.

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"Who is that young woman with Lieutenant Trent?" asked Madame Nitolsk. "Their odd English manners are pleasing, though they amuse me at the same time. I see they are very fond of each other—very, very, indeed."

"She is not English; she is American," said Alverstone, with just a shade of the piquancy which he felt.

"Indeed! and where has she her setting, a member of the American Embassy?"

"No, she is a student of song—a very promising soprano, I am told, of Signor Novara."

"The celebrated maestro?" again asked Madame Nitolsk.

"Yes, he is her *maître*."

"Ah, indeed! I am quite interested in song myself. I think I should like to know this young woman."

This she said not because of any genuine feeling she might have had for the song student in question, but for the reason that she had seen the soul-flit of Alverstone as he cast his quick glance at the mass of gold appearing above the shoulder of Lieutenant Reginald Trent, when the face of Julia Pembroke, glowing with the exhilaration of health and happiness, smiled the greeting in which the animated blue eyes had performed an engaging part.

Instantaneous as was the glance of Alverstone, it had not escaped the quicker eyes of the young widow—Madame Nitolsk. And she, with the intuition of her sex, at once scented danger—a possible rival in the affections of Hampton Alverstone.

"However, that does not prevent Lieutenant Trent from adoring her, something I see he does," remarked Madame Nitolsk.

The prompting motive for this remark was that she might note the effect upon her partner of the waltz.

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For her pains she saw nothing, but she heard: "You think Lieutenant Trent adores her?"

"Yes, I do. You see, a woman needs very little assistance in matters requiring nice points of detection, for woman is guided mostly by intuition." And she followed her assertion by a deep, rich-voiced ha! ha! ha!

"I think that young woman too fond of her own country to marry a foreigner," returned Alverstone.

"These singers are not always steady. They mean well, but their emotions often carry them far away from that which they would pronounce their ideal," retorted Madame Nitolsk.

"No doubt that is true at times; but," objected Alverstone, "I beg to differ from you there, for I have known many singers whose ideals have been of the highest and who have never been guilty of a violation of them."

"Ah! indeed! I fear me Monsieur Alverstone is a lover of some beautiful songstress. Is it not true?"

"Pardon, Madame; but a wise man always keeps his own counsel."

"Oh, pshaw! now you are in love, I know."

Alverstone laughed lightly, and the dance finishing just then, they went slowly from the ballroom.

When Julia had danced four dances, one with Trent, the next with the Prince di Pastanni, the third with a French officer, the fourth with the English Ambassador, she found herself for the fifth again with Trent.

She was tired and hot, and so said: "You have danced the last four dances and so have I. Let us go into the conservatory and rest this dance."

"Anything you suggest, Miss Pembroke," graciously accorded Trent. "Anything will please me, just so I spend the time with you."

Julia looked up quickly at him, for, knowing as she

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did his high rank in the English realm and the known position of herself in the social world, she wondered what she should infer from his remark. But he was a soldier, and his face was not easily readable. He knew just how to deport himself suitably upon every occasion. He was gay, frank, versatile, and had been long enough in the Orient to be what woman would pronounce "winningly chivalrous."

In the dimly lighted conservatory they found a delightful retreat and seated themselves to chat.

"Do you like Paris?" asked Trent. "No, I should assert that you like Paris, for every one who comes to Paris once is sure to come again."

"Yes, I am pleased with Paris, but I have never traveled, and so am not capable of making comparisons. I know little of Paris in general, for my studies have kept me close."

"Your maestro is exacting, I suppose."

"Oh, no; quite the contrary. One learns easily and well with my master, as much or more by accretion as by direct teaching. I adore my master; he is a great man."

Julia said this, and looked so abstracted that Trent knew she felt what she had said. Then he added:

"Every one knows that a student going through Signor Novara's school—finishing to the maestro's satisfaction—must be great."

"Thank you, Lieutenant Trent. I have so great confidence in the master that I take this praise as a personal compliment."

"Take it, then, and remember that his fame alone will make you win laurels."

"Thank you again; I hope so—for laurels I want, and as many as I deserve."

Hearing footsteps approaching, Julia looked up and



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saw Alverstone with the beautiful woman whom she had seen as his partner of the first dance. She thought it must be some one of whom he was very fond, or else they had done similarly as had she and Trent—found themselves together again after several dances.

While they were at some little distance she asked, in a low voice: "Who is that beautiful woman with your friend, Mr. Alverstone?"

Trent turned and glanced in the direction in which Julia had looked.

"That," said he, "is Madame Nitolsk—a widow."

"She is not French?"

"No, I think not; her husband was a banker in Calcutta, India. He was fabulously wealthy."

"Where does she belong, in Paris?"

"You mean, where she has her holding in society?"

"No, not that; to find her a guest in this mansion to-night is sufficient recommendation. I meant to ask where she lives."

But Trent had not time to answer, for they had come quite near, and he turned and addressed them with the question: "Is this dance over?"

When Alverstone saw Julia and Trent there in that out-of-the-way corner, he tried to lead Madame Nitolsk by another path, hoping to keep her from seeing what he knew would cause her to offer a comment in confirmation of what she had said when she had seen Julia smile at him in the dance.

But Madame Nitolsk seemed to divine his intentions, and, without giving him the slightest hint of the same, held him to the path which led past Julia and Trent.

Alverstone was annoyed at finding himself before his old friend Trent, with Julia happy and contented by his side; but Madame Nitolsk was in a rapture of delight,

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for she saw Alverstone's annoyance as well as his chagrin over the turn affairs had taken.

She told herself that the young singer held Mr. Alverstone by a chain not easily parted.

"Introduce me to your friend, Lieutenant Trent," said Madame Nitolsk. I have admired her from afar, and now I would come nearer, if I may. Mr. Alverstone tells me you are an American," said Madame Nitolsk, as soon as the introduction was over.

"Yes, I am an American."

"New York?"

"No, I am a native of Cincinnati."

"Indeed, is that place near New York?" asked Madame Nitolsk, this time addressing Alverstone.

"About a day's distance by rail," he replied, for, without looking at his interlocutor, he felt the force of her raillery. He knew she scarcely heard what was said in answer to her question put, and that she was pleased in his finding Julia and Trent in this secluded nook, where only the most searching eye might be able to see them.

"I saw you come in with Madame Cinati, and Mr. Alverstone tells me you are very dear friends."

"Yes, we are," replied Julia, smiling.

"Are you studying for a like career?"

"I hope to sing as a lyric soprano, but I am not quite sure that I can ever have a career such as that of Madame Cinati."

"One can not tell what one can do until one has tried one's wings," further observed Madame Nitolsk.

"Yes, that is true," coincided Julia.

"She sings like Madame Cinati now," said Trent, smiling down at the two women, for he had given his seat to Madame Nitolsk, and the two men stood before them.

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"Oh! and Madame Cinati sings—how shall I say?" asked Madame Nitolsk.

"I think I can not assist you with an unbiased judgment," replied Julia, "for, first of all, the lyric soprano is my voice, and I know its possibilities and can appreciate the real merit such a voice has; then I am an ardent lover of the Madame Cinati herself, aside from her artistic personality."

"Now let me say a word, my friends," said Trent, in a mimic petitionary voice.

Each assented by a bow of the head, and Trent went on:

"Miss Pembroke will be the successor of Madame Cinati."

"You are very kind," said Julia, "to say it, but much kinder to think it. I shall try to please you all when I do sing."

"When do you make your début?" asked Madame Nitolsk.

"A year from this Christmas. At least I hope to sing then."

"Ah! I shall be there," replied Madame Nitolsk.

"And I," said Alverstone.

"I wish I could add another 'I,' but I am not likely to be able to be there."

"You will try to come, will you not?" asked Julia, looking at him, her eyes lingering upon his face far longer, Alverstone thought, than was necessary; and, too, he thought Trent purposely, for the pleasure her sweet, questioning smile gave him, delayed the answer for which she waited.

"I shall certainly endeavor to be there," answered Trent.

She smiled a satisfaction with the answer, then carried her eyes from the face of Trent down to the little

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white fan which she held in her hand, and Madame Nitolsk looked provokingly tantalizing as she gazed hard and steadily at Alverstone, who understood perfectly just what Madame Nitolsk meant by it all. He knew she was asking him in the language of that gaze what he thought of that? And if he thought her intuition was not worth a reckoning, when she had told him that the American girl and the English officer were fond of each other?

"Madame Cinati's voice has the flutelike quality—has Mademoiselle Pembroke's the same?" asked Madame Nitolsk, looking first at one and then at the other of the two men before her.

"I think so," said Trent.

"I can not say," added Alverstone, "for I have not yet had the good fortune to hear Miss Pembroke sing."

"Maestro Novara employs a flutist to accompany me when I am finishing my arias and songs," said Julia.

"Indeed!" exclaimed Madame Nitolsk. "I wonder if that would not lead one to imitate the flute."

"I think it would," replied Julia.

"Who is your flutist? I am very fond of the flute."

This Madame Nitolsk asked for the simple reason that she wished to know another who was one in Julia's world. She knew it would strengthen her cause to know all whose influence in any way would affect Julia's life.

"Monsieur Nevere," replied Julia.

"Monsieur Nevere?" asked Trent. "Why, he is a portrait painter."

"Oh, no, surely not," returned Julia; "for he plays in the orchestra of the Opéra."

"Impossible!" rejoined Madame Nitolsk, who was known to use as many interjections as she had exclamations during an evening. Indeed, she had so much delight in the use of these interjections that those who knew her best were pronounced in their assertions that she had

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been known—by a wag who took pains to find out—to begin each evening with the first interjection in the list of an English grammar and to use them in their order on each occasion she had need of an interjection, which was often. “Etienne Nevere is a portrait painter of great renown, for I have known him for, lo! these many years. Four years ago he painted my portrait.”

“Now I beg to add a word,” laughed Alverstone, for he was much amused over what he was pleased to term a comedy of errors, though not exactly like that of Shakespeare—nevertheless a comedy of errors—though in Shakespeare’s comedy there are two men for one situation, while in this comedy there is one man for two situations.

“I have visited his studio, and he told me that he is flutist at the Opéra and for Maestro Novara and some others, for whom he enjoys playing.”

“Well, well,” said Trent, carrying his left hand with the movement which would lay it upon the hilt of his sword—a movement which makes of a military man a hero—a god in action—but the hand found not its support, and went below the point where it would have rested had it not been the custom for the hostess to say to each officer in the full dress of his rank, “Lay down your arms.”

“There!” exclaimed Madame Nitolsk, rising and taking the arm of Alverstone; “hear that beautiful waltz;” for floating out from the ballroom came the entrancing strains of a waltz, and she had taken it for granted that she and Alverstone would dance it together. “I know so few persons here, and I am in danger of becoming lonely. We will dance?”

It was her hope in this way to keep him from Julia Pembroke, for she was certain he would ask the American for this dance. She felt it instinctively.

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Alverstone apologized, adding: "I have this number with Miss Pembroke."

Madame Nitolsk's black eyes flashed their angered disappointment.

Trent saw it, but affected ignorance. Then he asked and had permission to lead Madame Nitolsk through the waltz then playing, with the assurance from Madame Nitolsk as she took his arm to move away: "The honor of the evening lies in a dance with the brave English officer—Lieutenant Trent."

When they had passed out of the conservatory, Julia said: "I am tired of dancing. If you will, I should prefer to sit here quietly and chat with you."

"As you did with Trent?" asked Alverstone, laughingly, while he seated himself upon the seat where Julia and Trent had spent the time of their waltz.

"As you please," replied Julia. "We said nothing of a private nature—all could have been said with you and Madame Nitolsk present."

Julia looked at him to see the effect, and she was pleased, for the happiness this bit of truth gave him he did not attempt to hide. He wished her to see it.

"Lieutenant Trent is a very interesting companion," remarked Alverstone, "for he has a fund of information upon every subject, it would seem."

Then for a little time both remained quiet. Silence reigned except for the splash of falling water from the alabaster fountain just to their left and behind a bank of American Beauty roses, for the falling water of the fountain made itself heard as it mingled with the water of the basin; and, too, the sweet, alluring strains of the Strauss waltz stole gently through the foliage of the great tropical plants, and the hundreds of delicately scented flowers of every description, until it reached the

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American man, seated beside the American young woman, for whom he entertained an experience of richest love.

"Miss Pembroke, there is but one subject upon which at present I am capable of speaking with you, and upon that subject I must speak."

Julia, drawing away her hand, for which he had reached, and which he had held for an instant, said: "Mr. Alverstone, I beg of you desist; I fancy I anticipate your intention, and I can not allow you to go further."

"Why not?" he asked, in hurried breathlessness, for he could not think that a young woman such as her straightforwardness had made him feel her to be would have encouraged him as she had done were she the fiancée of some other man. And Alverstone felt free to continue in the declaration of which he was determined to acquit himself, at this moment, if possible, for Hampton Alverstone was not a man of faint heart whenever he chose to perform an act, and he had not pursued this idol of his love dream, hoping to find a favorable moment in which to tell all, now to allow himself to be repulsed by the first adverse volley—no, indeed, not he!

"Miss Pembroke, I love you most passionately."

Julia put up her hand in a desistory manner and turned her face slowly away.

From the deliberation of this movement of Julia, Alverstone took courage to proceed, for, though he had met with strong rebuff, he began in a most supplicatory manner: "My love you must requite, Miss Pembroke. You and I are Americans of the same rank, and in our own land we shall be far happier together than you can possibly be as a prima donna—listen to me, listen to me, and say that you will be mine." Again he reached for her hand, and now raised it, in the act of pressing it to his lips; but Julia drew it away and put up both her hands, quite dramatically saying: "Do, not, do not."



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Alverstone seemed to see nothing. For, heedless of any protestation upon the part of Julia, he continued: "Then think of what I am saying, and at some future time, after a period of careful reflection, give me your decision. But, Miss Pembroke, do not forget to consider that I fell in love with you the first time I saw you, and that was when I handed you the music which you dropped on Rue Murillo; that I followed you to London, soon after, crossing the Channel on the same boat with you; that I sat at the table in Hôtel Cecil, at London, just where I did and in the position in which I did in order that you must see me, for I asked the chef to place me there; that at the opera, during the singing of Caruso and Melba at Covent Garden, I sat where I feasted my eyes upon you; that I followed you back to Paris, hoping to see you in the Paris Opéra, where I knew Madame Cinati would sing on last evening, for, finding you a table companion of hers at Hôtel Cecil, I thought you would be present when the Madame would sing here; that when I saw you a guest in the box with my friend, Lieutenant Trent, I saw the connecting link in the chain of fortunate circumstances leading to an acquaintance with you; that I fled from my seat in the orchestra to meet Trent on the staircase as he was descending. From that moment, when I was permitted an honorable introduction to you—to you—the only woman I have ever loved, you know the rest, and, though it is only some little more than twenty-four hours since that introduction, I can not forego this opportunity of declaring my undying love for you."

He ceased speaking and sat looking into Julia's face with a fixed gaze that seemed to draw from her an answer in the affirmative.

Julia had been deeply moved, as much by the pathos of his eloquent pleading and the touching story of his

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endeavor to find a right moment of presenting himself as by the wealth of love, the natural sequence of his manly nature, stirred by that powerful emotion for one whom he wished to call his wife.

She had sat very quiet during the entire time of his speaking—perfectly quiet—with eyes downcast upon the dainty little fan, which she had moved gently to and fro the while.

She sat so pensively quiet during the silence following Alverstone's cessation that this, together with a slight nervousness betrayed by her fingering of the delicate gold chain to which her fan was attached, gave Alverstone hope that he had not pleaded in vain, so he began his conclusion with, "I beg of you, bear constantly in mind that Hampton Alverstone loves Julia Pembroke, and wishes to make her his right, his honorable wife. Will you"—

"Pardon, my friends," said an excited voice, coming upon them; "have you seen Madame Nitolsk pass?"

"No, we have not," replied Alverstone.

"I wonder if you would?" again asked Trent, looking from one to the other, roguishly. "For two Americans to sit in this secluded spot so long means some interest in each other. I fear you might not have seen any one."

Julia looked up at Trent and smiled. But the warmth of Alverstone's emotion did not escape the quick eye of Trent.

"What are you doing with that wine?" asked Alverstone, quickly, not allowing time for Trent to say more.

"It is for Madame Nitolsk, but I can not find her."

"Where did you leave her? I thought you were in this dance."

"We were," said Trent; "but Madame Nitolsk wished to rest."

"Is she ill?" again asked Julia.

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"She said she felt faint, and I went to fetch her this wine."

"Let us go search," suggested Julia.

After a thorough search, when they had about decided that she must have left the conservatory, Julia, who had gone around what was another secluded nook like that in which she and Alverstone had been sitting, came upon Madame Nitolsk.

"Oh! Oh! Oh! here is Madame Nitolsk. She is dead!" cried Julia, in a voice of horror.

"No, she has only fainted," said Trent, coming near and with his left hand lifting her head, while he held the wine to her lips.

She was seated upon one of the chairs, and her head had fallen to one side and was resting against the high back, while the appearance of the entire body was like that of one out of which every spark of life had gone.

"There, she is reviving," said Trent, as her eyes opened and she sought each face of the eager, anxious, little group around her, saying: "It is nothing."

"Miss Pembroke," said an attendant, coming up at that moment, "I am sent to say that Madame Cinati is going, and that the Madame will send the carriage for Mademoiselle later."

"Please tell Madame Cinati that I shall go with Madame," she replied.

Then, taking Madame Nitolsk's hand between both of hers, Julia pressed it tenderly, saying: "My dear Madame, I am forced to go, so I bid you good night, and I wish you a speedy recovery."

"Thank you, dear; you are a lovely girl. Good-night, Miss Pembroke."

While speaking the manner of Madame Nitolsk was charming and her voice low and tender. Not a tremor of the nervous chill then shaking her was visible, either

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in the touch of the hand or in the tone of her voice. She opened her large black eyes big and wide and fastened them on Julia, gazing all the while with an intensity that was fierce, until Julia, not realizing just what was happening, seemed electrified, and each woman looked into the eyes of the other woman until Alverstone, who was a man versed in the ways of the world, and now understood Madame Nitolsk and what she was doing, took Julia by the arm, saying: "Miss Pembroke, pardon; great prima donnas like Madame Cinati are not pleased to be kept waiting."

The spell was broken. Madame Nitolsk closed her eyes, and Julia, still dazed, looked toward Trent and said: "Good-night, Lieutenant Trent; I have had a delightful evening." Then she and Alverstone walked away.

"I shall attend you to your carriage, if I may," said Alverstone.

"Thank you; it is quite agreeable, I assure you," answered Julia.

Together they said good night to the Lord and Lady Trent, and on the way out they passed numerous persons who knew and loved Julia, and who made many friendly remarks concerning her.

"Ah, Mademoiselle Pembroke, you are not leaving so soon," said the Princesse de Grancourt, as Julia was passing near to the Princess, who was chatting gaily with a French cavalry officer and his lady.

"Yes, Princess; it is the pleasure of Madame Cinati to go now, and I go with the Madame."

"But the dance is not over, and *souper*! What a sacrifice of your social pleasures you dear, dear song-birds make! No doubt it is wise, but I am sorry to see you go."

This the Princesse de Grancourt accompanied with the prettiest of French manners, the sparkling diamond star in her hair the while vying with the sparkling brilliancy

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of her beautiful black eyes, for the Princesse de Grancourt was known to have a very handsome pair of eyes.

Julia smilingly bowed, and she and Alverstone left the *salon* through a long line of admirers. As they went from the Princesse de Grancourt, the Princess was heard to remark to the French cavalry officer and his lady that she was surprised beyond measure to know an American girl could be so well-bred, and when the officer dared to suggest that this advancement on the part of Miss Pembroke in the matter of cultivation might be the result of her long stay in Paris, the Princess objected that she had little time for manners; for those graces in matters of etiquette—*savoir-vivre*—were not learned in a few years; indeed, they were not learned at all, she thought. And the Princess defended her position with the statement that only through a long line of polite ancestry are the graces of true cultivation at all possible.

"But this Miss Pembroke pleases you?" ventured the cavalry officer, "and she has been in Paris only a few years."

"Yes, she does please me, really, she does. I should take her for one of the ladies of our most exclusive set." Then she continued: "She is simply perfect in manners and bearing—all. I laughed when Lady Trent told me that she had a nice little American girl who was perfectly well-bred and whom she wished me to know."

"And this little American girl surprised you?" again asked the cavalry officer, pleasedly.

"Yes, she did; I found her all Lady Trent had said of her."

"Ah! my dear Princess, Americans have a cultivation all their own, and to enjoy their cultivation one must be an American," said the officer.

"Well," replied the Princesse de Grancourt, "I shall never be an American. I love Europe—I love my own

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France, and, above all, I love our exclusive European society."

After the partings, as are usual on such occasions, the carriage passed quickly off, drawn by the splendid thoroughbreds, and became one of many dashing away up Champs Elysées, with the difference, however, that within this carriage rode two of those golden-throated songsters, whom every reigning queen of a realm can not but acknowledge her superior; for each queen reigns over her own special realm, while the song queen reigns over all realms—all lands—reigns the acknowledged queen of song, and song is a universal language—a language of the world—of the universe.

Alverstone stood looking after the carriage until it had gone out of sight, then he turned and reëntered the mansion.

When Madame Nitolsk and Trent had gone for the waltz the Madame had suspicioned that Julia and Alverstone had not entered the ballroom, and she soon affected fatigue and expressed a desire to go into the conservatory. She chose the way that led near the seat where she and Trent had left Julia and Alverstone, and, hearing Alverstone's voice, she soon decided on a seat not far from them, yet far enough removed to keep them in ignorance of their presence. Then she had asked Trent to fetch her some wine.

As soon as he was gone she crept, soft-footed as a panther, winding her sinuous form in and out among the plants, now stealing through banks of roses, now gliding noiselessly as a venomous serpent about to spring, until within sufficiently close proximity to the loving pair in their little corner—their retreat of bliss—and then she did what her serpentine movements would warrant her capable of doing—peered through the leaves and saw—

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the guileless pair—saw Alverstone reach for Julia's hand—saw Julia reclaim that hand—saw the force of his passionate love, and heard, as distinctly as if it had been meant for the eavesdropper—that declaration of love, with the preliminaries—his finding Julia, when he had picked up the music, and how he had followed her—all. Nothing had escaped that hidden eye and hidden ear, and she had felt the blow and had staggered beneath it.

She had recoiled within herself, to deliberate, and had tried to retreat, but in her anger had missed her way and had allowed herself to faint, as it seemed that she might thus more effectually hide her true condition, for her agitation was uncontrollable. Julia had found her in this place when she, Trent and Alverstone had gone in search of her.

When Alverstone was putting Julia carefully into the carriage of Madame Cinati, above on a balcony overlooking the court—just over the massive stone arch of the entrance way—stood Madame Nitolsk. She was alone, for she had come out upon the balcony just as Julia and Alverstone had gone down the great staircase leading into the vestibule, and she had a morbid desire to see the happy pair appear on the pavement, as they crossed it, for Julia to enter the carriage.

Again the Fates were with Madame Nitolsk, for though she heard no word, nor saw no grand strokes, she saw enough of the pretty little attentions, caressingly given, on the part of Alverstone, as he carefully helped Julia in and arranged the folds of her dress, lest they be fastened by the closing of the door—yes, she saw every tender inclination—and they were many—of his manly form as he bent, now this way, now that, until the carriage sped away and she had seen him stand and look after it. And how had he stood!—in the attitude of a worshiper, looking toward his beloved shrine. And



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she saw a deep sigh, sighed heavily, as he left the spot where he stood in the entrance.

Had Alverstone looked above he would have seen a pair of fierce black eyes, blazing with unquenchable fire of destruction for some one who at that moment had angered Madame Nitolsk, and for one of her dark complexion that threatening eye foreshowed the darkest evil.

She would know this young American singer. She would make her an intimate friend. She would know her at once, for she knew that as yet she had not accepted the love Alverstone had thrown in such prodigality at her feet. She would pay this old music teacher any price for an hour, just before or just after the time of Julia Pembroke's lesson, and then she would meet her at the master's and every one knew, she told herself, that Americans are so common; she was certain there could be no hindrance to a speedy and a close intimacy with this common American girl, who threatened her with the doom of a neglected woman. She acknowledged to herself that she loved this American man, and she had loved him from the first time her eyes had met his, on that eventful evening when her husband had introduced him into their Calcutta home. And now, this very evening, she had heard this man say words of undying love within the conservatory—but into the ears of a rival, and not into those of herself were they spoken.

She had thought out the plan; she had resolved, and now she would act. She stamped her foot angrily, then started suddenly—as all who love deeds of darkness always do—for something had touched her upon the shoulder; but it was only a leaf from some foliage upon a balcony above the one on which she stood, and on its downward course it had touched her and she had started as she should, and as she would have done, had she seen the end.

## CHAPTER IX.

The next afternoon at about the hour of three Madame Nitolsk rang at the Signor Novara's and was soon admitted by the liveried butler, who put the customary question for all strangers, "Have you an appointment with the maestro?"

"Yes, I am a new pupil," she answered.

"Very well; enter if you please," and, throwing open the door leading into the *salon*, he announced Madame Nitolsk.

At the end of the *salon*, which was three rooms, opening one into the next behind, was the maestro. He was seated at a grand piano, and at mention of the name he arose, and, coming forward, bowed and said: "Will you come back to the piano with me?"

"Thank you," said Madame Nitolsk; "I shall certainly do so."

No preliminaries were necessary, for Madame Nitolsk had sent a letter to Signor Novara by special messenger, who had brought her by return trip the answer to her request that he permit her to enter his school, and he had told her to come at this hour.

"Ah!" said Madame Nitolsk; "I am overanxious to study with you. I should like to begin at once. I do not wish to lose a minute."

"Indeed!" said the master, turning and riveting his gaze upon her.

He was a man to whom the ear was an infallible guide. He had spent fifty years in listening to the tones of the human voice, and the slightest shading of a tone meant a corresponding shade of character. He turned

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and fastened his keen, old eyes upon the beautiful woman and tried to see something upon the face that might strengthen his conviction that she was not as noble in soul as beautiful in body, but he was foiled, and very reluctantly he told himself that for once his judgment had deceived him.

He urged upon himself that perhaps he was growing old. Had he been acquainted with the science of facial lines he had read exactly that of which his ear had given alarm, for Madame Nitolsk was not on guard just then.

Her delight at finding herself so graciously received by Julia's master was unbounded. She now felt that her way to intimacy with the American was clear and very easy of access. Her real self was markedly shown upon her face in gloating over the picture of her certain destruction of the love between the man for whom she entertained her wild passion and the woman whom that man loved—loved as every noble American man loves the woman of his choice.

"Here, Madame," said the master, sitting down at the piano. "Come stand here, beside me, and I will test your voice."

As the maestro looked up at Madame Nitolsk he paused, for the face, though beautiful to a fault, held some strange force hidden somewhere, either behind the soft, velvety skin of matchless beauty or in some feature of that face of unnatural placidity.

He could not say what it was; he only knew that he felt disturbed. He looked down again at the keyboard, and the strong old face was thoughtful—he seemed hesitating.

At last he looked up quickly, and spoke:

"Are you very serious, Madame? For, if you are not, I do not care to test your voice. To say the least, an inartistic pupil is tiresome; but to me an inartistic person,

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whether pupil, or not, has no claim upon my time, for I am an artist—I have a short life, at longest, to accomplish all I wish to do for this great art of song, and I do not want any one to take my golden hours, unless he is in great earnest—very, very serious.”

“Oh, my dear maestro, dismiss all fears of my disinterestedness. I am very sincere, indeed.”

“What method have you followed?”

“According to your beautiful *Bel Canto* method, I can not sing at all—this is why I have come to you. I heard Madame Cinati sing last evening, and, too, I learned that Mademoiselle Pembroke came to you. I decided that you might be able to do something for my voice yet. I have studied much, though with various teachers, and with teachers of diverse methods. Nevertheless, I beg of you accept me. If I prove unworthy, dismiss me, and as some compensation for the time wasted upon me I shall present you with precious jewels of great value.”

“Oh! la! la! la!” thundered the maestro, jumping to his feet and rushing around the room in a frenzy of excitement.

“How dare you insult art like that! How dare you! Don’t you know that all the jewels in the world can not repay a master for the time he has stolen from his art to teach an insincere pupil? Can you not understand? Why—I toil by day and by night for my art. I love my art. I love my art, I want no money—I want only art—art—art!”

“Ah! you are great! you are great!” exclaimed Madame Nitolsk, putting her palms together, and as if in adoration. “I will prove to you that I am as earnest in the study of song as any pupil you have ever had.”

This she said, accompanied by such grace, by such beauty of manner, that the maestro’s rage subsided and

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he smiled—the smile overspread an honest face, one over which the soul's light shone with the halo of inspiration.

Madame Nitolsk, standing in the attitude of meekest submission and immobile as a marble statue, saw the smile—read the open soul upon the beautiful, old countenance—and inwardly chuckled with ecstatic joy over the victory she had wrought upon this strong, noble man.

What cared she for his art? She was one of those souls who hated harmony in any form, yet one of those unnatural souls capable of making harmony or discord at will.

The maestro again went to his place at the piano, and, striking G on the staff, said: "Give that sound on the open Italian A. Don't force—sing easily."

Madame Nitolsk, who had stepped close to the side of the piano, and facing the maestro, proceeded to follow as closely as possible the dictations given her, for she was extremely anxious to impress the old master that she was serious in the matter.

"No," said the master; "that tone is veiled. Hold the tip of the tongue against the lower front teeth. You let your tongue slip back, and that is the reason your tone is veiled."

Madame Nitolsk took the note again: "How strange!" she exclaimed, when she had finished. "My teacher taught me to hold the tip of the tongue against the cord at the base of the tongue."

"You said your teacher's name was—?"

"Signor Vinola," said Madame Nitolsk.

"I don't know him."

The master tried to fix the tip of his tongue in this manner, but soon desisted with a shake of his head. "Whoever he is, that is barbarous—no teaching at all. But I am testing your voice, not giving instructions. Let us continue."

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He struck middle C and prepared to test her chest register, going down the scale to G below the staff, then up to the F above middle C. Every tone made by Madame Nitolsk was deep, mellow and quite perfect, showing that in the chest notes at least she was not a novice. The maestro was pleased, but said nothing.

Preparatory to leading to the head notes, he struck A above middle C. "Now," said he, "take that tone and give *la, si, do, re*, and continue on up in fourths until I say stop."

Madame Nitolsk put forth her best effort, but the head notes were worse than had been the medium notes, for they were thin and swallowed.

She strained, forced and strangled so desperately to reach G above the staff that the master was irritated beyond endurance, for nothing partaking of the nature of forcing was recognized as music by the master.

He had borne with her struggling E and F, but he could not listen longer.

"Enough," he cried; "you look like a comic sketch of a *tenore robusto*. You are choking yourself. The higher one goes the lower the head must incline. A down chin on high notes is the secret of all their exquisite beauty."

"But Madame Cinati holds her head high," quickly interrupted Madame Nitolsk.

"That is true," replied the master; "some do, especially coloraturas, when executing high, florid passages, such as the Bell Song from 'Lakmé,' which you heard her sing," and as he spoke his fingers mechanically picked the melody, which translates so well the tinkling of little bells. "But if Madame Cinati had held her head down her high notes would have been sweet and resonant instead of simply clear and penetrating." Striking D, E, F sharp, he said: "Again, please, sing *re, mi, fa*," for

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the master used only the European method of singing notes—the method in which the *do* always remains at C—the immovable *do*.

"Use the same broad A you did in chest and medium. Be sure," he added, with admonitory emphasis, "be sure to hold down your chin."

Madame Nitolsk took the dictation and sang. It was truly wonderful how the tones had improved with only the dropping of the chin.

"Now," said the master, in a pleased tone, "that is good; your voice is very steady."

Turning from the piano, he sat as if lost in thought. Then, stroking his short beard, he began: "You are a contralto; you have a very beautiful voice. To-day there are few contraltos. In my day there were some, but that is past. Your voice has been misused. I see your teacher has taught you to direct the voice against the soft palate. With the soft palate as the point of aim, the voice is without resonance. In the drawing-room it would be a bellow, and were you to sing at the Opéra or at La Scala you would sound like a child singing from the bottom of a well. There is no penetration of tone in such placement of the voice. To possess the ringing and the carrying qualities, the voice, especially the female voice and the high tenor, must be directed against a hard surface, and the soft palate will not serve this purpose—the soft palate is soft."

"Possible!" exclaimed Madame Nitolsk.

So greatly had the master interested her in the science of voice production that for the time being she forgot the motive which had led to her present course of study.

"Signor Vinola told me that with the voice directed against the soft palate there was music—soft, liquid sound—as he expressed it. Furthermore, he said that

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with the sound directed against the front of the head the voice was shrill and like car whistles."

The master made no direct reply to her statement.

"There are few singers of to-day who have made a name for themselves who do not follow, in point of aim, the teachings of the *Bel Canto*."

"Indeed?" inquired Madame Nitolsk, with a genuine surprised interrogation. "Madame Sembrich, Madame Melba, Monsieur Caruso and Monsieur Plançon?"

"Ah, yes; every one you have mentioned. They are the perfection. And, too, there are others. Listen well and I will tell you what few teachers will—the *appoggio*, or the placement of the voice. In the medium register it is against the front of the hard palate; in the chest register it is directed against the front of the hard palate, with the necessary borrowing of resonance from the chest cavity; in the head register it is against the front of the head, here," and the master placed his left hand about an inch back from where the heavy growth of hair joined the forehead. "It is never directed against the forehead. Do you understand what I mean by the direction of the voice?"

"Oh, yes, I do. You mean the conception held in the brain must direct the voice against"—

"Yes, yes," interrupted the maestro; "that is right. I see you understand something about the voice."

Then turning his eyes upon her, he scrutinized her closely.

Madame Nitolsk saw and read his thoughts. She knew he doubted her sincerity, and before he had time to express his thoughts she spoke.

"When I was some younger, before I was married, I thought to become an opera singer, but now I wish to study for art's sake alone. I am too old to become a professional, but I want to sing well."



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"How old are you—twenty-seven?" asked the master.

"No, Signor; I am just twenty-five."

"Ah! that is young. You are only a baby. Can not study for the opera! Of course, you can, if you want to do so. But you have interrupted me. Let me see; I was testing your registers. Oh, yes, I remember now; I was telling you that you are a contralto. You have many defects to overcome. It will be at least three years before I can say your voice is very good. Come, let me see if you have any flexibility of voice."

He tried her on turns, triplets and other ornaments, but there was no agility. After trying the plain scale, to ascertain the extreme limit of her voice, he said: "Your compass is two octaves, from G below the staff to G above the staff. Very good, but how your chin swells. I can see it from here. You let your tongue slip back down into your throat. The chin must always be soft in singing or the timbre will be guttural. Now a little song; I want to see your style."

"Will the '*Cancion de la Heurta*' do?" inquired Madame Nitolsk.

"What is the composer's name?"

"Don Sedeña," she answered; "it is a little Spanish song."

The master, shaking his head, said: "I do not know it. Signor Vinola gave it to you, I suppose." And, rising from the piano, he prepared to seat himself near by and listen.

"But I can not sing without an accompaniment," objected Madame Nitolsk, plaintively.

The master shrugged his shoulders and said, impatiently: "Well, then, sing something else, '*Voi che sapete*'—did Vinola ever teach you that?"

At the same time he struck the chords of the prelude, which in its treble follows the melody.

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"Ah! yes, I know it well. It was the first song Signor Vinola gave me."

"Madame Nitolsk," said the master, in a very encouraging voice, for he hoped to disarm her of any fearfulness, especially since he desired to know the exact style in which she would sing this very expressive little song, "you will sing as easily as you would were you singing for a few sympathetic friends. Do not attempt to follow any directions which I have given you as the proper manner in which to sing. Sing as Signor Vinola taught you."

The master finished the prelude, and Madame Nitolsk began to sing.

Though she sang the notes very well—her compass permitting this, without the least effort; in fact, the tones, as tones, were good—when she had finished the master shook his head, thoughtfully, for some moments, as if he were incredulous.

"Naturally you have an exquisite organ," he began; but where is your heart? I never heard any one sing like that. Surely you have none. Do you speak Italian?"

"Ah! si," she quickly answered; "Signor il Maestro parla egli italiano."

"Si, Signora," responded the master; "that is my native tongue."

And they continued to speak in Italian instead of French, as they had been doing.

"Then why do you sing *Voi che sapete che cosa è amore*—'you who know what is love'—like you were a vicious mad dog? When you sang *'amore*—'love'—you looked like an executioner. Ugh! what a face! Your eyes flashed as if you wanted to kill me."

Madame Nitolsk let a soft laugh escape her, for he had been the first person whom she had known to read her as she was.

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"Madame, I repeat, you have an exquisite organ. Of course, you have habits which must be broken, and your voice must be developed. But you have no more heart than a stone, and I tell you conscientiously that if this is your soul, you can never hope to sing beautifully. A singer, when singing, can hide nothing of the inner self. When a woman has not *cœur de femme*, that is, when the heart does not speak through each note, no matter how perfect the organ, she will never be an artist. The test is over. Do you still want to study? Do you want to sing?"

"Oh, yes, maestro; do take me!" pleaded Madame Nitolsk.

Just then the doorbell rang. The master was absorbed in his roll-book, which he jokingly called his student police book.

"Ah, I find I can have you at nine A. M.," he said.

"Impossible!" she exclaimed, for she was not in the habit of responding to any call at that hour, much less to the call of a duty.

The master continued to look down the list and spoke, half audibly, yet seemingly to himself: "Miss Pembroke at half-past nine, Lafoyer at ten and Monsieur"—

"Oh! I will cancel my engagement of to-morrow and come to you at nine," interrupted Madame Nitolsk, in a highly excited manner.

Her agitation was impossible of suppression, for now she saw the climax to her design in the study of song. She had not dared to hope for so speedy an arrival of the longed-for moment, that moment when she and Julia Pembroke should be in intimate association. She would—for she knew her subtle powers—make this American girl trust her, and then— This delicious bit of scheming

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was broken off by the butler, who at that moment pushed open the door to admit Miss Pembroke, for this was Julia's hour.

"Viens mignonne," cried the master.

Julia crossed quickly to where the maestro stood and pressed the extended hand in both of hers.

During the past six years he had been to her a friend—a more than friend—a father, and she had trusted this noble man implicitly.

"Are you ready?" The voice was tenderly affectionate.

As he looked into the face of Julia he was startled, for he saw something there which was entirely new to him. What could it be! There was a sublime, yet earthly something, which clung to her face and seemed to be a part of it. His observation became more keenly inquisitive. No trace of illness was there. What could it be? Ah! he knew; it was a mellowness, caused by her disappointment; for none knew better than he how bitterly she regretted the postponement of her *début*—her appearance as *Lucia*, on Christmas eve. This had been the goal for which she had worked, for which she had hoped, and which had been just within her grasp. Yes, he had it now.

"Are you sad your old teacher told you to study another year?" he asked quietly, almost reverently.

"No, maestro; I am glad. I shall never be happy to leave," and she bent and kissed with affectionate tenderness the delicate, though strong-set hand of the master.

"May I stay for Miss Pembroke's lesson?" broke in Madame Nitolsk, who had been a silent and very willing spectator of the very pretty scene enacted between fond master and loving pupil.

"If you wish," replied the maestro.

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"Ah! you, Madame Nitolsk!" said Julia, turning around, for she had thought the woman seated there a stranger.

Signor Novara never introduced his pupils to one another nor to others not pupils before he had asked permission to do so.

Madame Nitolsk was the personification of joy, and, quickly enfolding Julia in one of her warm smiles, said: "I account it a bit of excellent good fortune that I am granted the privilege of listening to you sing. Last night I heard much in praise of your voice."

"A friend of yours, Julia?" inquired the master.

"Yes, maestro; I met her last evening at Lady Trent's *soirée*."

"Ah! I see. Did you bring the song I told you to?" And while speaking the master played here and there upon the keys.

"Oui, Monsieur; here it is."

Julia unrolled the piece of music, which was a *vocalise*, and placed it upon the piano.

While Julia sang, Madame Nitolsk looked at her and recalled her own dark reflections regarding Julia. She wondered how she, the Madame Nitolsk, of such great wealth, could be disturbed by that simple, unaffected, unassuming, young woman. She heard nothing. She sat and read avariciously Julia's every expression, every movement, every motion, but could not pick a single flaw in the character sketch she made of her, whereby she might justify herself for her jealousy and for her venom. Then she ceased to see objectively. She was wrapped in the solitude of her own imaginations. But though she saw and heard little of her surroundings, she saw and heard much subjectively. She remembered what Alverstone had said to Julia when she was hidden behind the flowers in the conservatory. She had seen Julia, and

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had seen how beautifully cold she was, though the tones of her voice had rung true to love. Yes, she remembered this and more, for she had heard all that passed between Julia and Alverstone.

Writhing inwardly, under the scorpion's sting, she tried to smile at Julia, who stood facing her. She vaguely heard the trills, the scales, the arpeggios, some long cadenzas, the caressing melody of a *vocalise*. She heard the master's voice break in every now and then—"Your breath is jerky. Your mouth is too wide open," some other such corrections, and frequently a "*brava*."

Within herself a terrible battle was waging. She felt triumphant, then, again, vanquished.

A loud chord on the piano recalled her to the realities of life. She laughed at herself and her folly; then she dreamed again, and there was a hand-to-hand skirmish in her brain, and it is sometimes more interesting to view an imaginary struggle than to view the smallness of true action.

Then the devil came and spoke to her, for this one was a possibility, this which she was cogitating.

"Brava! brava!" cried the master.

This again recalled Madame Nitolsk, but she did not laugh this time; instead, she shut her teeth and her eyes contracted, as she stared at the singer.

"Lo, Hear the Gentle Lark"—Julia had begun to sing that simple story, told in notes, of the gay, careless heart of a modest brown bird—a lark.

As Julia sang, the lark was in her throat, but her voice told more than a mere vocal race. It was a divine song, for something was playing at the harp strings of her heart, and a tender ether whispered in at her ear—whispered the dawn of love to her awakening soul.

Madame Nitolsk was not dreaming now; she was fully awakened and in the fullest possession of her powers,

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but as Julia left the melody and sang the half-cadenza Madame Nitolsk again looked in at her own thoughts and forgot where she was, but not who she was.

As the song went on, the velocity, when nearing the climax, became marvelous, and the thoughts of Madame Nitolsk sped on, but not out. They were making a whirlpool in her brain, and she stood alone, very small in the center, as the surge circled around her. There were many voices, which sang wild, discordant snatches; they were mocking her, they were twisting around her, they were trying to crush her, to sink her.

Then, half dazed, she heard Julia laughing, but in reality it was only the repeated thirds detached, and not a laugh.

The whirlpool raced on, and all the voices shrieked in chorus—"You are jealous." Then they all laughed at once. Far down, and very near her heart, a small voice, with a tone like the sharp blade of a knife, said: "Alverstone does not love you; he never did and never will. He loves Miss Pembroke and she loves him." Then everything stopped and she awoke.

The piano was not playing, neither was Julia singing. The master was speaking, but not to Julia, for both master and pupil were looking toward the door.

Madame Nitolsk turned and looked, too; she saw Monsieur Nevere bowing low, and heard him say: "Pardon, maestro, a thousand pardons," and then behind Nevere, a little to his left, she saw—no—impossible—one bowing as if entranced. Was she dreaming? Was this only a hideous semblance of a reality? It seemed far off. Now she heard Nevere say: "My friend, Mr. Alverstone, he begs to come and hear"—

"Yes, I know, I understand," said the master, interrupting Nevere. "Sit down, Monsieur Alverstone; please excuse my perforced rudeness. This is a lesson hour."

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Alverstone looked at Julia and smiled. Madame Nitolsk saw and read what was revealed in that smile.

Julia winningly returned the silent greeting, but said nothing, for she was standing on the rostrum, with her music upon the music rack before her.

Alverstone was satisfied with the recognition shown him by Julia, for he knew now that she was not resentful toward him for his sudden and persistent expressions of love for her. He turned to go to the seat indicated by the maestro, when he saw a pair of flashing eyes riveted upon him. He had not seen that a third person was in the room, when he and Nevere entered, but he was very sensible of the fact now. Pausing an instant only to regain his self-possession, he passed over to Madame Nitolsk, instead of taking the seat he had intended taking.

"Ah! Madame Nitolsk, you here to study?" said Alverstone, and he took a small chair close to the sofa, upon which Madame Nitolsk sat, and in enough proximity to speak easily with the Madame.

"No doubt, you think it a trifle odd," said Madame Nitolsk, with a soft laugh. "Very odd—perhaps that I should be here, that I"—

"Silence, Madame," shouted the maestro, rising and stamping his foot; "this is a serious studio, not an idle drawing-room. If you wish to converse, there is the reception room."

Although the few words of the little chit-chat had been carried on in almost inaudible tones, the low murmur was not permissible by the master.

At the reception of Lady Trent Alverstone had learned from Julia the name of her vocal instructor, and that Nevere was her flutist. During the ride home that night he was busy with his thoughts, arranging and rearranging, finding no rest until he arrived at the satisfac-



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tory conclusion as to how he might meet Julia at Signor Novara's. He would see Nevere on the morrow and try to accompany him on a visit to the master's, where he would surely meet Julia.

On the next day, under pretext of great love for the ensemble of the voice and flute, he had made known his desire to Nevere. He had feared that if he should specify the Signor Novara, Nevere might easily suspicion that the American man might be overfond of the American singer; and, too, since the love affair of Etienne Nevere had proven so barren a waste, Nevere might feel it his duty to keep him away from like temptations. Alverstone, fearing Nevere, whom he knew to be very wise in judging of actions, had only expressed his desire in a nonchalant way. Still he saw the hopelessness of his prospects in meeting Julia unless he should be able to do so through the medium of his new friend—Etienne Nevere.

On that morning when Alverstone had been ushered into the presence of Etienne Nevere and had expressed his hope to hear Nevere play for some singer, Nevere had given him a glance and then answered: "Come along with me now. I am going to play for an American. You will enjoy this, I know, for she has an extraordinary voice."

Alverstone did not know Etienne Nevere, but Etienne Nevere knew him, and, what was of vastly more consequence, had Alverstone been aware of the same, Nevere had read the meaning of the facial twitchings, which told of the golden chain of love that bound Alverstone a captive to some one. Though not a curious person, Nevere meant to know who that captor was.

"The lesson lasts but fifteen minutes," said Nevere, by the way of apologetic explanation for his nervousness, "and the maestro is as punctual as clockwork. I

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dare not be a moment late. Every one reports there on time."

Alverstone had feared to inquire the name of the singer; nevertheless he had gone willingly, glad to find himself on the way to the scene of Julia's daily life. And now, in the joy of this supreme moment, he failed to conceal the happiness which he felt.

Of the four within the room, Julia was the least able to see him. Madame Nitolsk gave Alverstone her undivided attention. The master and Nevere were so placed that their time was divided between duties and observation of Alverstone, whom both regarded for reasons appealing to each. Nevere was alive to the impression Julia made upon Alverstone, and the master, though not gifted in mind reading as was Nevere, yet felt uneasiness lest this young American might have some hidden purpose in coming—some design upon the artistic life of his "baby pupil," as he caressingly termed Julia. His usually benign countenance often gave evidence of this inward commotion—this fear of scented danger. Every now and then he looked inquisitively over his glasses at Alverstone, then at Julia, then at Madame Nitolsk, and then he would say to himself: "No, it is not for Julia; this young man has not come for Julia."

From the flushed condition of Madame Nitolsk's face he judged that it was she who had drawn this young stranger hither. Then, too, he told himself, that since Julia had been with him for the past six years, and had never had any one meet her before, it was unkind to think her guilty of so flagrant a violation of his rules. For Julia understood there was nothing so displeasing to her master as having listeners present during the lesson hours.

Only at rests could Julia think of aught but her song. It was a very difficult song, but especially difficult when

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sung for an exacting master, whose unerring ear was keenly alive to the slightest error in the nice shading of a tone. But when she found herself in the enjoyment of a relaxation, afforded by a moment of rest, her mind took on pleasant thoughts of Alverstone. She knew the secret thread by which he had found her bower of melody, and this thought communicated its roseate tint to her cheeks.

Alverstone, whose eyes never lifted from Julia, saw the color and also saw the thought in the modest glance, which, simultaneously with the rising glow, she gave him. It was only a glance, but it was sufficient for each to understand that each understood the mutual regard each had for the other.

Wicked Cupid! how many great careers in philosophy, in medicine, in law, in theology, in art, in every commendable walk of life, have you checked, if not entirely destroyed, in your wild, madcap career!

There is no such word as fail for this god of love, if ever he succeeds in getting his subjects to cast the fateful glance. It is wise to attempt no trifling with Cupid. Only earnest contestants for the prizes offered by the clever little cherub should enter the lists.

She sang again, but the breath was insufficient for the phrase, and the master called out: "That breath was taken too quickly; it was far from enough to sustain that phrase. Try it again."

Julia knew the cause of the failure, and nobly determined to recall her thoughts and give her mind wholly to the maestro and to her song, for she knew that she had allowed herself to divide her attention between Alverstone and the song.

"Take the same phrase again," said the master; "your breath was better, but not your best. What have I told you to keep ever in mind?—'No water, no sailing; no

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breathing, no singing.' According as you wish to sail you seek the water upon which you would sail, and according as you wish to sing, you must find the breath with which to sing. Now, ready; breathe slowly."

The master spoke kindly, but firmly, and finished by shaking his short finger at her, as if in warning; then concluded: "There, now, remember."

As Julia, Madame Nitolsk and Alverstone descended the few steps, and while waiting for the butler to open the street door, they heard distinctly the voices of Nevere and the maestro.

Nevere had remained a few minutes at the door of the *salon*, talking with the master. They were evidently speaking about music, for every now and then the waiting group could hear the master say: "Four sharps is not the key," and sentences of like musical import. And then the master's words came clear and distinct. Evidently he had counted much upon the ensemble of the voices of the three below to drown what he was saying to Nevere; but the emphatic admonition came clear and defined: "Nevere, please, the next time you come, and each time after, remember that my studio is not an *Exposition des Chiens*. When it is I will send you many invitations. Your choice of guests is admirable. Monsieur Alverstone must excuse me. You know, Nevere, that I am very sensitive on this point."

The maestro had not liked the slight nervousness which Julia had shown during the lesson, and he would not have it again. Never once in his long life had this grand old man known an idle hour, and to him it was intolerable in others.

Nevere descended into the vestibule and all went out together.

The air was humid, and some fifteen minutes before it must have been raining; but the pavement was dry, as

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it is in Paris in an incredibly short time after a rain has ceased to sift, fall or pour, and the sky was gray.

Nevere was gloomily thoughtful, for he had disliked very much the idea that the maestro should have intimated that he was not serious—he, Etienne Nevere, master-genius of the art of the brush and the canvas—portrait painter of ecclesiastics, of royalty, of social heads.

It was no slight pain, this, he felt at the Signor Novara's insinuations. To think that he must be reminded of the inconsistency of a great artist like himself in being guilty of failure to keep his appointment with the maestro as flutist, and for that very grave cause—gossip with a comrade.

Madame Nitolsk was too angry to speak, for Alverstone had stepped ahead and was walking beside Julia, while she was left no choice, but forced to walk with Nevere.

Julia walked in silence and held a silk handkerchief over her mouth, and partially closing her nose, to preclude the possibility of a cold.

"I never walk when the air is not fine," said Julia, in a muffled voice, to Alverstone. "I am very sorry, but I must perforce take a cab here, or I may suffer a cold."

"Stand here, Miss Pembroke, and I'll go signal that cab yonder."

He started in the direction of a victoria that was crossing the street a short distance up.

"You are wise, Miss Pembroke, to take a cab," observed Nevere; "if you walk home in this air you should have an Angora in your throat to-morrow."

He was glad to say a word to Julia, for he did not fancy Madame Nitolsk. He was a French gentleman, of the fine, old school, and nothing pained him more

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than close contact with a woman lacking in delicate sensibilities. And as anger shows the depths of one's character, Madame Nitolsk, with all her subtleties, was no exception to this rule.

Nevere was a great portrait painter, and so knew that something was different in her manner, which he had never seen before. But he told himself that he was not in a very prepossessing mood; and then, too, he was an artist, not a society man, and, therefore, could not pet each whim and mood of women, no matter how beautiful or brilliant they might be.

Alverstone could not attract the notice of his cabman, but one turning the corner just then saw the young American waiting for her cab, and drove up to the curbstone where the group was standing. He knew this young girl to go there for lessons, and wisely watched around for her. On days that were not pleasant Julia never failed to take a cab. She was only one passenger; besides, she always gave him his expected gratuity. Had Julia known all, she would have seen that far back in the beginning of her life in Paris this same driver had had a chat with the concierge of her apartment house, and that from her he had learned of the *bon cœur*, or kind heart, of Mademoiselle Pembroke—the American singer.

Alverstone pressed Julia's hand, Nevere bowed deferentially and Madame Nitolsk smiled, as one much pleased, saying, "*Au revoir*, Mademoiselle."

Julia bowed once and said: "Good evening." Then, quickly covered her mouth again, and Alverstone closed the door. And the victoria drove away.

As Madame Nitolsk and the two men neared the end of the Rue de Monceau, at the juncture of the Avenue Friedland with the Boulevard Haussmann, Etienne Nevere left his companions of the walk and went in the

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direction of the Place de l'Étoile, for he was to play for Madame Legay, the first lyric singer at the Opéra.

Alverstone and Madame Nitolsk turned to continue down the boulevard. As they left Haussmann and went to the Rue Auber, a landau drawn by two dull-black horses turned off the *rue* down the boulevard. It bore the coat of arms of the Trents. Alverstone saw it and recognized it, and so did Madame Nitolsk.

They walked on in silence for a few minutes, then she drew very near Alverstone, and, lowering her voice to a faint sound, said: "Our friend Lieutenant Trent is soon to be married."

"True? To whom?"

"Miss Pembroke. You know of their engagement?"

For a moment Alverstone was caught in the trap set by Madame Nitolsk. He gave a very perceptible start at mention of Julia's name, but quickly concealed his emotion.

"Where did you learn this?" he inquired, curiously.

"Oh! you do not know of the affair?" again asked Madame Nitolsk.

"No, I do not," replied Alverstone. "Who told you, may I ask?"

"Yes, you may ask; but I can only reply that many, many persons have told me. I only learned of it last night, at the *soirée*. It seems it is the talk—rumor, if you please—of all English circles. They say it is the cause of the Lieutenant's return from the far East."

Alverstone looked down Rue Auber and tried to keep Madame Nitolsk from seeing his face, but she was exceptionally sensitive to such matters, and needed her eyes no longer to tell her that this bit of news was torturing Hampton Alverstone, and in a most excruciating manner. She fairly crushed herself in her diabolical delirium at the agony.

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She had seen his loving pressure of Julia's hand before he had closed the cab door. She had seen the soul-flit go from eye to eye as Julia had raised her eyes when saying her one good-bye. All that had transpired to-day, from the time of the entrance of Alverstone and Nevere, had been carefully noted by Madame Nitolsk, and she had accepted as a foregone conclusion the love of Alverstone for Miss Pembroke. She knew Miss Pembroke did not reciprocate this love as fully as Alverstone might wish, but she was certain that the American singer was not insensible to his love.

Hampton Alverstone loved Julia Pembroke, and in so far she felt herself vanquished. But she would not remain vanquished. No obstacle which she wished removed ever remained long before her, and this one would be removed. She had once been in Paradise, for like all persons, she had been born a child, and children are innocent, and childhood is earthly Paradise.

Alverstone's love for Julia must be quenched. To Madame Nitolsk it were not possible that Julia was capable of enslaving Alverstone so deeply that he either willingly or unwillingly should love even a fold of cloth because it touched her exquisite throat, or that he could love distractedly the crease in a pair of gloves because the gloves had been too hastily clasped around Julia's delicate small wrist. Madame Nitolsk still knew Julia Pembroke to be a beautiful woman—beautiful from her innate charm of womanhood—a happy condition, to which no power on earth could ever have elevated Madame Nitolsk.

No one understands such existing circumstances better nor feels the crushing force of their truth more than the one who has fallen by the way and can never again stand upon the summit of perfect womanhood or perfect manhood.



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Madame Nitolsk knew that only by intrigue could she ever harm the woman whose sterling worth had moved to its depths the love of an English-American—Hampton Alverstone.

He should think Julia a double character. It might be hard, she reasoned on, to bring him to believe aught wrong of Julia, for these Northern men and women were not prone to think ill of those in whom they placed their trust. As this was the only course which seemed to present itself, she began at once.

"You do not think it probable that Miss Pembroke is engaged to Lieutenant Trent?" again asked Madame Nitolsk.

Alverstone turned and looked inquiringly at her. There was a small gleam in his eyes, that, as he continued his gaze, almost twinkled. She saw it and understood that he did not believe what she had said. Very well, he shall believe, she thought, with fine mental emphasis on the shall. She must find evidence of a somewhat material nature. What should it be?

They were now passing a small show case of a jeweler. The window was artistically arranged, and the gold and precious stones looked very tempting against their purple background. It was near Christmas, and a fog had settled down on Paris, as it often does during the winter months. The lights had been lit, and the interior of the shop was almost as gay as the brilliant window. Lying within one of the little purple boxes was a beautiful lyre. It was almost the facsimile of the one Madame Nitolsk had given Trent on the morning of the ride in the Bois.

Madame Nitolsk's brain worked quickly, and soon framed a scheme. This jewel in the window had made a suggestion.

"Look!" said Madame Nitolsk, stopping Alverstone

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and glancing first at the window and then at him, with a quick, inquisitive, yet smiling regard, and then back at the window again. "Look! there is an exact pattern of the lyre given Lieutenant Trent by Miss Pembroke. The one near the center—near that plain gold bangle. See?" and she pointed her small gloved finger solicitously toward the place at which she wished him to look.

She felt secure in saying just what she wished to say to suit her purpose, for well she knew that there was nothing to fear from detection by either of the men—Alverstone or Trent. For Alverstone would not allow himself to ask so personal a question of any one, she was sure, and Lieutenant Trent, she knew, was far too proud of his name ever to acknowledge having received such a present from any woman between whom and himself there existed a bond less than that of kinship.

"It is a very becoming present from a gifted singer to her fiancé," she went on, enthusiastically. "Oh! it is so beautiful. You must see it; the Lieutenant wears it on his chain—very beautiful diamonds in it—three, I believe—fine ones. A lyre from a songstress whom he has decided to cage for himself! How romantic!" She looked askance at Alverstone as they walked on, then, again: "It is so like the dear little girl. Really, I am much in love with her myself."

She paused, in hopes that Alverstone would speak, but his mouth was sealed. They walked on, and the short silence which ensued was ominous. It turned the heart of Madame Nitolsk to stone; it frenzied her jealous mind. She laughed lightly—a pretty laugh, though.

"Truly, if you do not speak soon, I shall begin to think you are not pleased with the good fortune of your friend, the Lieutenant, in winning for himself your charming American songstress."

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Alverstone recalled himself, understanding that Madame Nitolsk had reason to think his action strange.

"It would be a very appropriate gift, I am sure. I am not cruel; I should like to see Miss Pembroke happy. If she loves Lieutenant Trent and he loves her, there is no objection offered by me."

"But you saw the lyre, did you not, last evening, at the Trents?"

Alverstone's cane struck hard upon the pavement. "Yes, I did," he retorted, petulantly. "But how do you know Miss Pembroke gave it to him?"

And his tone was curiously inquiring, for he was loth to believe that Julia had given Trent the lyre.

"I was struck by its unique beauty, and I told the Lieutenant so," replied Madame Nitolsk, with celerity. "I asked him where he had bought it. He said it was a present. Had I suspected aught of the truth I should not have put the question so pointedly. I expected him to say that he had gotten it on Rue de la Paix or Rue Royale or at Tiffany's. He actually blushed—that brave Lieutenant Trent—then I said, 'Ah, I beg your pardon; but I know who gave it to you.' He blushed a deep crimson at this, and then I said: 'Miss Pembroke gave it to you.'"

"And what did Trent say?" asked Alverstone.

"Not a word, yet I know that his silence is properly construed when read to mean assent to my question. Therefore, what more would you! I ceased my importunities, and, putting all the little rumors together, I felt that I had the name of the giver of that beautiful lyre."

She paused a moment and looked up at Alverstone with a pleading look. Then she went on more rapidly than before, but she did not seem to be so emphatically explicit.

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"As to their engagement, I heard it from many, many people. And did you not remark how devotedly he guarded her during the evening?"

"I know they were together much," replied Alverstone, "but not to the exclusion of others."

"Ah! that is very prettily put. You men have so nice a way of appearing far above the ignoble pettinesses of women. Nevertheless, my dear friend, Mr. Alverstone, listen. Do not be vague; listen—the engagement—a lyre—what people say—what follows—the marriage"—

She shrugged her shoulders and laughed; at the same time she looked at Alverstone to see if her words had had the desired effect. Alverstone was looking straight ahead of him and made no reply. At first he had disbelieved his companion, but he had seen the charm. And, though he disliked himself for the unmanly thought that there was more than a perfect consistency in their dancing as many dances as they chose, he yet felt a gnawing of jealousy. Alverstone loved Julia, and the true love of an American man permits of trust in the object of his warmest affection.

Yet a little shade of desolation swept across his love-lorn soul.

"Perhaps that is why she gave me no encouragement," he thought.

They were now at the door of Madame Nitolsk's. Alverstone lifted his high hat politely and bowed, as all Parisians are able to bow—to the point of perfection.

"Good evening, Monsieur Alverstone."

"Good evening, Madame Nitolsk."

"You will come to see me soon?"

"Thank you; I shall remember. *Bonsoir, Madame.*"

*"Au revoir, Monsieur."*

They parted.

## CHAPTER X.

Nevere, seated before a table in his apartment, had just finished the transposition of a tenor rôle into the barytone.

"How ridiculous!" he thought. "Tenors all want to be leading tenors, and most men want to be tenors. I suppose they should not be blamed, for they only wish to soar, and that is natural. But think of all this work for me, just to suit a whim. It will not be at all pretty sung by a barytone—'*Roméo son démon*'—*re, re, sol, sol, mi, re*. The *re* of '*Roméo*' must be *si* below the staff. The key is now two sharps instead of one flat—a trifle gayer. This kind barytone Demot said he did not want to go above *sol*."

"Very well, Monsieur Demot, you need not fear high notes; *la* in alt is as high as Monseigneur Tybalt, tenor, squeaks, and you are more than an octave below."

Having finished the transposition, Nevere started to rise from his work. A sharp pain ran through his arm where he had been wounded by the Apache. He crossed to the window and looked out upon the street. The day was rainy and the sky was gray. The gloom outside seemed to enter his soul, and sad thoughts of Alverstone's budding love for the bright, young singer made him contrast this fresh, young love with that which for years had burned within his own veins. His, though now grown calm, was none the less strong and steady. The fitful hours had passed as a course run by the most ravaging of fevers, and during its period of delirium he had raved in wildest incoherency. The crisis had come and gone, and he was left in calm serenity, yet still as ardent

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a lover as before. He foresaw the same for Alverstone if he should find himself entangled in unrequited love.

"I should like to keep him from going down into the pain of such disappointment. If he could marry this American nightingale, it would be all very well—but—if he should be forced to love her as I have loved my European nightingale—from afar, with not a shade of love for any other woman—he will not be so happy as he should be were he to place his affections where he might hope for a requital. Oh! love! love! love! what pain, what anguish! what never-ending woe follows in thy wake if"—He paused and dropped his forehead upon his open palm as though the anguish were more than he could endure.

His arm here recalled him; he gripped it firmly with the left hand, saying to himself: "I see I must take care of this arm; if it should grow much worse I could not play my flute, and then—what then? My position at the Opéra would be given to another."

The thought made him wince with a sinking thud of the heart. He could not imagine life bearable without the solace of those nights when Madame Cinati sang at the Opéra and he filled the position of flutist.

"Oh, love! love! is it possible that there has ever existed or ever shall exist a philosopher who can define love—love, which, on the heights, arrives at a state of delirium, in which is found utmost completeness of the mind's desire—completeness which for calm and peaceful, mutual trust is unequalled by any image words are able to paint of beatific visions of that future state of bliss. And then love, when in the depths of despair—no after state of anguish pictured in most vivid language can equal the torment endured."

He arose from his table and paced rapidly around the room, fully exemplifying his idea of disappointed love.

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After a time he paused in front of a window, and, looking out, he saw a forlorn creature below upon the opposite side of the street. He had one hand upon the crank of a hurdy-gurdy and was scanning the building in front of him. The practiced eye of one accustomed to look for a human being, if perchance a sympathetic chord might be struck, caught sight of the artistic face of Nevere at the casement, which he had just opened to feel if the air were very humid.

If it should be, he told himself that his arm pained because of a tendency to rheumatism.

"*Un petit sou, Monsieur,*" came up from below.

"*Mercie, Monsieur,*" again came from the wretched being in rags and tatters, as it looked at the two-sou piece thrown down by Nevere.

Then in gratitude the crank turned, and the hurdy-gurdy began its play. But what melody did it sing out! Did he know it? It was madness to listen to it. It was the song with which Madame Cinati had so often so unconsciously driven him almost over the precipice of despair. "*A quell 'amor.*" He would not hear it, but it went on, and Nevere banged the casement windows to and locked them, as if wood and glass were impenetrable by musical sound. Still he heard "*misterioso, misterioso, altero.*" It was a faint melody, now singing up from below, but it was loud enough to Nevere. He knew it too well, and the tune was playing in his brain, and it sounded like strident clarions in his ears.

He flew to the piano and tried to play the music, the transposition of which he had just finished, but in vain. All his fingers would play was one tune, one certain following of notes. It formed a sweet ensemble of sound, but to the flutist it was the song of the Lorelei. It was the song that triumphed in his ears; it was the keynote of a great opera. The battle was won by the

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forces of the past; for, as the great scientist has said, we are at the mercy of our "hypos," and in the case of Nevere the "hypo" of which Madame Cinati was the immediate cause ruled him with an iron hand. He had dreamed of this brilliant woman; had spent hundreds of hours in silent, almost motionless ecstasy of contemplation of her power over him, until often he would have furnished a very interesting example of the hypochondriac.

He would often conclude one of these fearful meditations with a determination to seek medical aid, for he would assure himself that at least he was sick. But instead of calling to the rescue some doctor of medicine, in wildest imaginations he continued to feed his ill-starred love. All other women were as little children to him when compared with Madame Cinati; and all this, too, though she was rarely in his presence, and less often was he able to exchange a word with her.

The little ebony clock struck one, and this recalled Nevere to the hour and its duties.

"One o'clock," he thought; "and at one-thirty Lady Trent will be here for her sitting." He rang for his butler.

"Here, Paul," he said, for that worthy quickly responded and ceremoniously posed, and said: "Monsieur"—

"Well, Paul; you got the charcoal?"

"Oui, Monsieur."

"And the ochre and pastels?" went on Nevere.

"Oui, Monsieur," again came the answer of assent, in a low, gentle voice.

"I saw the fruiterer below in the street this morning, and he had fine white grapes. Did you get some?"

"No, Monsieur; the vender let the rich Americans in the fine house across the street have them."



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"Not all?" said Nevere.

"Oui, Monsieur; all—their butler took the whole basket, and the rich man stood in the door and threw a big piece of gold at the vender and told him to keep it all."

"Oh! la! la! la! la!" said Nevere, in extreme disgust.

The butler, thinking his master was annoyed at having no grapes, said: "Monsieur, I'll get you the finest grapes in the market, at *Potin's*."

"Oh, Paul, that is not it. I am grieved over these Americans. They think their money is the best thing in the world, and they have so much that they throw it around here as if they thought French people were all beggars—no higher than the gamin of the gutters."

"Oui, Monsieur," meekly assented the butler.

Nevere looked out of the window and his eyes grew very small and the mouth seemed to set.

The servant saw the fierce look and understood that his master was unhappy. But he did not try to wonder about the cause, for it was an oft-recurring expression, this brown study of the artist.

"Monsieur," timidly began the butler.

"Well," answered Nevere, without changing his attitude.

"I heard something this morning. May I tell Monsieur?"

"Is it good news, Paul? For if it is not, I do not care to hear it."

"Oui, Monsieur, and it will interest Monsieur."

"Very well, Paul; what is it?"

"The American girl who studies French with Madame Lefevre, on the first floor, has just gotten a large fortune from America."

"Ah! Paul; are you sure?"

"Oui, Monsieur, I am quite sure; she is a great heirless—rich—rich—very rich."

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And Paul had great difficulty to restrain himself within required bounds of decorum, he so longed to gesticulate as to the size of the fortune.

Nevere had become much interested, and was in danger of betraying to one of the serving class his interest in this American singer, as she had come to be called by those who knew her.

"Do you mean the young American who studies French with Madame on the first floor?" asked Nevere, endeavoring to suppress his eagerness to know.

"Yes, I mean that young woman."

"How did you learn this?"

"My cousin and I were standing at the large door talking this morning. I was there looking for another fruit vendor, when my cousin came by and stopped. The Mademoiselle passed through the door and went on in, to her teacher. My cousin said to me, 'That young woman was in the office of my employer, Monsieur La Blanche, this morning. She came in with the opera singer, Madame Cinati; and after they had gone out of the office I overheard Monsieur La Blanche say to his secretary that this young woman with the opera singer had inherited a great fortune in America; that she was one of the richest women in the world; that she owned three large gold mines in California.' That, Monsieur, is what my cousin said."

"I am glad to hear this. The Mademoiselle is very deserving. There, go, Paul."

Nevere was cut short, for the ringing of the bell called Paul to his duty.

"Ah, indeed," thought Nevere, when he found himself alone. "A fortune; I hope it is true. Then this Alverstone might be able to win the fair damsel away from her career, as they put it. True, these singers sing for art's sake; but often, too, for the money that is in it."

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For his part, Nevere loved his work, his art, far too much to desire the care of much money. His work, which he loved as a part of himself, brought him good returns in a substantial price for every portrait painted by him, and he cared not to dazzle the world by any vulgar display of money; so, of course, as far as wealth was concerned, he was content—no man was richer. His art—his delight in the beauties of the world and his enjoyments of those pleasures which were to his taste made his wealth far greater than that of the owners of the largest gold mines in the world.

He looked out at the sky through the window and observed that the clouds were chasing one another rapidly, which bespoke a fair afternoon. And that it would be better for the portrait of Lady Trent.

"Lady Trent to see Monsieur Nevere," said the butler, who had entered softly.

"Show her ladyship into the studio, and I'll be there presently."

Lady Trent had come to know Etienne Nevere under most favorable circumstances, for her sister, the Princesse de Loire, had often insisted that she, Lady Trent, give Monsieur Nevere a sitting, and she had visited the artist's studio, and often thought she would do so, but as yet she had had no picture painted by Etienne Nevere.

On the morning after the Trent reception Lieutenant Trent had told his mother of the man attacked by the Apache. Lady Trent had been pleased to remember that this man was the same who had painted those portraits, most highly prized of the long lines of ancestors on the walls of the house of the Prince de Loire, in which the Trents were then staying. And she had pointed out to her son certain portraits which Nevere had painted. Then it had been decided to visit Monsieur Nevere in the afternoon of that same day, and it had pleased Nevere to

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arrange for a sitting for Lady Trent on the following afternoon.

When Lady Trent had suggested to her son that he accompany her to the artist's, he had very readily consented to do so. She had been delighted with this ready compliance, but she had been far from delighted had she known the secret spring of assent.

Trent was a soldier, and adventurous therefrom. A woman like Madame Nitolsk fed this wild strain, and he thought that she might be there, since Nevere did work for her.

Though Trent was free to call at the house of Madame Nitolsk, he enjoyed this possible meeting, since he was anxious that his mother meet her as often as possible. Trent was truly grateful for the protection given him from the Sepoys, but he was equally grateful that Monsieur Nitolsk's widow was here in Paris.

He knew she was not acceptable to his mother, but he thought that were they thrown more together it might come to be different.

The studio of Etienne Nevere was much to the liking of Lady Trent, for an air of delicate refinement pervaded the entire atmosphere, whether taken in its separateness or as a whole. Then, too, she liked Nevere. He pleased her very much, indeed, for several reasons, not the least of which was the fact that he was flutist for Maestro Novara. In this capacity, while accompanying Julia Pembroke, he would know something of her, and Lady Trent had no little hope that Reginald, her son, might be led to consider this American girl as a type of woman preferred by his mother above all others.

She knew her son would be present during some part of her sitting, and she would be sure to lead the conversation toward Julia when Reginald should be there. She was devoured, so to say, with the desire to see him

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the husband of some serious-minded woman, one who would do for his home what she herself had done for the home of his father, Lord Trent—guard its sacred precincts, shield its innocence and purity from attacking wolves of society, besides dispensing its hospitality upon the worthy.

When shown into the studio Lady Trent had seated herself upon a divan, and, from her point of view, the effect of the whole was exceedingly beautiful. While enjoying the beauty ensemble of the room her attention was suddenly arrested. She found herself intently gazing into two large and strangely captivating black eyes. They were only the eyes of a little child, some three or four years of age, but Lady Trent was powerless to look away from the wondrous eyes. She was a mother at heart, as well as by right of sex, and something in those deep, deep eyes of the child's portrait spoke, to her, appealed to the mother within her.

She arose and crossed to where the portrait rested upon an easel. As she stood before the canvas, smiling and lost in communion with the spirit pent up within that lovely child, whose beautiful soul spoke touchingly through his large, soft eyes, the door opened and Nevere entered.

"Good morning, Lady Trent," said Nevere, crossing to her, and, with due ceremony, taking the hand Lady Trent held out to him. "I am sorry to keep you waiting."

"Do not fear for me, Monsieur Nevere," replied Lady Trent. "Did you not see my delight in listening to the many pretty things that child yonder has been telling me?"

"You like it, then?" asked Nevere, pleased, as artists are with an admirer of a work which to them stands for more than the ordinary portrait.

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"I love it—the most beautiful countenance I have ever seen," replied Lady Trent. "The curls," she continued, "are caressingly tender, yet seem to partake of the severity of dignity that holds one as strongly as do those wondrous gazelle eyes."

"Yes, I agree with you, Lady Trent," replied Nevere.

"I should not ask, is the child as beautiful as the portrait? for I know that Monsieur Nevere makes only perfect copies."

Lady Trent had a most happy manner of being delicate and tactful on all occasions.

"No," gently objected the artist. "I have made him no more beautiful than he is."

"May I ask the name?"

"He is the little son of Madame Nitolsk."

"The widow from India?"

"Yes, that is her child."

"I did not know she had a child."

"Yes, but he is older than that now. I painted that four years ago, and I painted the mother then, too. She was in Paris with her husband, and I painted these two, but could not finish the father, before he was called home to Calcutta. Here is the mother at that time." And as he lifted the Oriental silk drapery from before the large life-sized portrait upon an easel standing just behind the portrait of little Adino, Lady Trent's face took on a very different expression from that worn at the meeting of little Adino.

"She is a very different type from her child, you see," began Nevere. "The child has the large eye, with other features suiting, and the most delicately sensitive mouth, while the mother, though also dark, has the almond-shaped eye, with corresponding features. The mouth, minus all sensitiveness—small, clear-cut and firm."

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"How well you artists read the face."

Nevere laughed in reply, and, after adjusting his easel to suit the position of Lady Trent, he said: "When I began my work as an artist I saw nothing but lines, lines, lines, on every side; when I took my daily airing or joined my fellows at the club or in a café, I often felt myself at such a loss to understand the meaning of the word face that I feared my reason was departing. I saw no faces, saw no persons; I saw only lines, creases, shadows, lights, repose, action."

Then he paused, both in his talk and in his work, while he stepped back from his easel and surveyed the master strokes he had already put upon the canvas. Then he continued as he worked again: "Just as now, I am searching for the values, as we term them in the language of our art—yes, I am searching for the values, which are to make this portrait of Lady Trent exactly what Lady Trent would have it to be. For years I suffered so much from this pain of seeing no face as a face that I feared I could not enjoy life and be a portrait painter."

"But you do not experience this difficulty now?" observed Lady Trent.

"Ah, no, indeed, Lady Trent; I am quite a normal being now. I think my trouble in accommodating myself to the requirements of this line of work lay in my over-anxiety to gain time. That is generally the case with young artists, and the intenser the nature, the intenser the degree of assiduity with which the student applies himself. There! will you come here, Lady Trent?"

Nevere had a habit of calling away his models at any moment, and to this he attributed his rare skill in making portraits of undeniable naturalness, for no portrait of Nevere's painting was found stiff, cold or lifeless.

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After Lady Trent had looked with approval upon the outline of herself, he perfected her pose again and began anew to work and to talk.

"You are a little stern, for you, Lady Trent," he made observation. "Please allow your eyes to rest upon the face of little Adino. There, that is good. I thought that would rub out that unnatural line. It is gone, and the result is fine.

He laughed good-humoredly, and Lady Trent smiled a little.

"I am glad you advised looking at Adino. Looking at him makes one happy. I should like to be taken that way," and she smiled again.

"There, you looked extra fine when you wore that smile. I must catch the light with which this smile illumines the face. We don't want the maternal over-developed in the face, either, and this is my specialty, working for different shadings—different values—so that I have the entire personality, and not a one-sided portrait. In classes where I studied I have known the model to sit facing the strong light, and no mercy shown, for what should have been a smooth forehead would be creased with light-wrinkled frowns. Neither does one want to have a set gaze, else the portrait is likely to remind one of the appearance of Carlyle, whose portraits give the impression that he is looking at something hidden far away in some forgotten corner of his brain."

"Pardon, Monsieur, I wish to remark that little Adino bears himself like a prince."

"His grandmother was the Principessa di Turinna."

"Indeed!" exclaimed Lady Trent, in genuine surprise; "I have often heard of that family. I do not understand. Madame Nitolsk is not an Italian."



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"Really, Lady Trent, I do not know. I often tried, during my work on her portrait, to gain some knowledge of herself and her family, but she allowed me not the slightest clue. If you are tired, Lady Trent, you can be seated and rest, for I can work here without you some little time."

"I am not tired; I think I shall keep my pose."

"When I was fifteen years old," said Nevere, "I studied in Rome. I was a kind of helper in the studio of that famous artist, Suido. He painted portraits of members of the royal families, from all parts of Europe, and some for the great rulers of the Orient. Among his patrons were several of the Turinna family, and I remember well when the Principessa, their only daughter, came into the studio. She was nineteen years old. She was very beautiful."

"She must have been beautiful," interrupted Lady Trent, "if this child resembles her."

"Yes, Adino resembles her very, very much; perhaps when he is nineteen years old he will resemble her, quite. She was as amiable in disposition as beautiful in form and face. She was the delight of her parents and the fond pride of her adoring brothers. It was a fine sight to see those four brothers vying with one another in their endeavors to do her homage."

"But how did she come to marry a Russian?" asked Lady Trent, eager to get to the point that held most interest for ladies of her type—the irregularity—an Italian and an untitled Russian.

"Ah! Lady Trent, the same sad story—she eloped with him; and for this unfilial act—she had never so much as expressed to any of her friends the slightest fondness for the man—she was disowned by her family, and society entirely ostracized her. For two years I knew nothing of the beautiful princess; she was never

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seen in public after. But one day on the Corso I saw a nurse pushing a cab with a little child in it. That child was the father of little Adino."

"That little child," energetically interjected Lady Trent, "grew to be a brave and noble man."

The thought of the service rendered her in saving the life of her darling Reginald, swept wave-like across her, and as she pictured the horror in death at the hands of those heathen Sepoys, Nevere again suggested rest. Lady Trent walked over to look at the part of herself upon the canvas, and expressed herself satisfied with the result of the deft hand of Monsieur Etienne Nevere. Then she sat down to relax a few moments, for, though fitted by physical strength to be the mother of the brave Lieutenant, her portrait would be the better for an intermission of relaxation.

"The banker Nitolsk must have been of the old Roman type," observed Lady Trent, in continuation.

"Yes, he was a perfect copy of his mother."

"Oh! I see, and this little child, Adino, resembles his father and his maternal grandmother—the Roman blood predominates right through," said Lady Trent, thoughtfully.

"It is a strange blood," said Nevere, "this Roman blood. People speak of the dying out of the Roman blood, but their observations and deductions are not carefully made, I am quite sure."

While resting, Lady Trent narrated to Nevere the rescue of her son by the financier, Nitolsk.

"Ah," said Nevere, tenderly, "that is like the banker's Roman ancestry; they were nobles."

"I wish," said Lady Trent, "that his life might have been spared."

"You know of his death?" asked Nevere, cautiously.

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"Yes, I have the story as told by Madame Nitolsk to my son, and as reported in the papers at the time of his death," and Lady Trent detailed how he had been found dead of heart failure.

"That is the same as the account contained in the 'Figaro' at the time—something over a year ago."

"Sudden death must be horrible, indeed," said Lady Trent. "Now I think I shall take my position again. Do you ever play for Miss Pembroke?" asked Lady Trent.

"Yes, Lady Trent, I do; and I am always glad to accompany her," replied Nevere.

"I presume you find her quite a singer."

"Yes, she has a beautiful voice and she is a thorough artist. She and my flute are rivals."

At this juncture the hanging across the entrance to the studio was parted by the butler, and Lieutenant Trent entered without announcement. After he had passed through he stopped and gave his mother a military salute, saying just one word—"Mother."

Had Nevere not stood quiet before his picture, and in the attitude of admiration of mother and son, he had found that maternal fondness and motherly pride had a monopoly of the lights and shadows which rested at that moment, and steadily upon the countenance of Lady Trent.

But who could work during the entrance of the handsome young English officer!

After the loving recognition shown the mother, he advanced toward Nevere, who would not approach him while in the discharge of a loving filial duty—no, loving filial privilege—which was for him fraught with so much gracious tenderness, extended his hand, and the customary salutations of such men passed between the two.

"You are suffering less, I hope," said Trent, as he

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walked toward the seat to which Nevere invited him, but beside which he only stood, laying his right hand upon the back. His mother was standing for her life-sized portrait, and were he at this time to sit upon the chair, Lieutenant Trent would never respect Lieutenant Trent for so great a breach of etiquette, not to mention the hurt to filial devotion, which for his mother he had in the highest degree.

"I suffer little except for the sudden stitches in my arm, thank you," answered Nevere, as he resumed his work on the portrait. "A little more to the left, Lady Trent. There, that is better. Keep that just a little, please; I like that pose of the head."

"Mother," said Trent, "I saw Miss Pembroke in a cab on Champs Elysées."

"No doubt, my son; this is her lesson hour."

"She had a large bunch of roses lying upon her lap, and, mother, she and the roses were exactly of the same tint."

"She has a real English complexion," replied Lady Trent.

She was much pleased that her son had noticed this Miss Pembroke, for, though a tiny straw, it thus far showed the direction of the current of his mind.

Nevere went to the window and changed the curtain drawn across for one of a very delicate rose, saying: "It makes little difference about these curtains at this stage of the work, but I like to see the effect in shading, if I am only in the charcoal period."

Just as Nevere again worked, Trent said: "Mother, as I left home this afternoon, a few steps from our door I met Madame Nitolsk."

That Lady Trent was far from pleased with the mention of this name by her son, and in one of his happiest veins, Nevere read in the zigzag lines of the inter-

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mezzo between the two acts of repose. He waited for the emotion to pass, and for the time of the second repose, by taking his box and knife from a stand near by and sharpening his charcoal, but the time of sharpening was perforce long drawn out, for Lieutenant Trent went on: "She is a handsome woman, mother."

Nevere pretended to look at his easel and then at Lady Trent, and again at his work upon the easel, presumably for purposes of artistic comparison, but in reality to see the regard in which Lady Trent held the name of Madame Nitolsk; and, though a very conservative man, he inwardly admired the excellent judgment of Lady Trent in preferring her son's acquaintanceship with Miss Pembroke to his notice of Madame Nitolsk. Yes, he would tell the bit of servant gossip.

"Permit me," said Nevere, laying aside the basket in which he kept his charcoal refuse. "There, Lady Trent, a little to the right again, please; I want that shadow on the hair. If you will listen, I can entertain you with something apropos of that young American singer."

"Miss Pembroke?" asked Lady Trent.

"Yes, Miss Pembroke," said Nevere. "I should not call her the singer, but at Maestro Novara's she is called the American singer."

"Go on, my man," put in Trent; "we are not averse to a bit of news, if it should be only gossip—that is soldierly," he added, and he concluded with a soldier's merry laugh.

"Well," said Nevere, "I heard to-day that Miss Pembroke has just fallen heir to a very large fortune—a fortune that makes her one of the richest women in the world."

"Truly!" exclaimed Lady Trent, who had lost herself enough to have turned entirely around, and now stood

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facing the artist, who also stood facing his model and smiling at Lady Trent, and then at Lieutenant Trent. The latter, while betraying little emotion, was yet visibly pleased with the news.

"That is excellent for her," said Trent.

Though Lady Trent had uttered but the one word—"Truly"—it was so strongly exclaimed that Nevere knew it bore much of importance to Lady Trent. But had he known nothing of this, the elasticity enlivening the muscles of her face and form had sufficed for a correct reading of the delight Lady Trent felt at news of the fortune of Julia Pembroke. Nevere glanced at his drawing and then at Lady Trent, and thought what wonderful effects delight, happiness and all kindred emotions can produce upon the human organization. He also thought it a happy arrangement in the economy of things, that the artist was free to catch any mood he chose while producing lights and shadows with his colors. He was a great artist, and worked subjectively as well as objectively.

His eye traveled to Trent and rested quietly upon him while he asked: "Had you heard it, Lieutenant?"

"No, I had not; I hope it is true. May I ask where you learned it?"

"You may ask, but I am not proud to tell you that I have only two servants as authority; yet I am happy to give you the exact account, as I learned it."

Then Nevere related all his servant, Paul, had given him, after which he playfully added: "If I were of her day and generation, I think I should lay siege to her heart."

Trent laughed and then said: "What matters the disparity of a few years."

"No, not for me," answered Nevere. "No real happiness ever came from a marriage between generations,

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whether that were the first or the sixth or any generation or fractional generation between. I have noticed that there are enough griefs when the contracting parties are of the same generation; but, alas! when otherwise, it is always true that the younger companion languishes, pines, dies or divorces."

And had he and Lieutenant Trent been alone, he had added that other condition, obtaining most frequently in these unnatural marriages.

"Sometimes the old have better physique and more vigor than the younger," opposed Trent. "I mean to live to a good old age and be hale and hearty. See!" and he straightened himself as if on duty in a dress parade, with the finished buoyancy of the touch of his left palm upon the hilt of his old English sword.

"It is certainly a happy view that you take of the inevitable ravages of Father Time," observed Nevere, for sure he felt that one of his weak physical organization could not hope for more than his three score years and ten.

"Well, I am a better soldier when I entertain this view of longevity."

"Ah, a philosopher, I see!" the artist mused, half to himself.

"No, I am not a philosopher; I am only a soldier, nothing more."

"Perhaps you are right," commented Nevere, "but I'll wager you are something more than a soldier."

"Something more than a soldier!" ejaculated Trent, almost indignantly, for he was proud of his soldier character, and for the title of English soldier he would have suffered most savage torture; for to him nothing was superior to the private in the rank and file, except it were the officer who led the private on to victory or helped him to endure defeat.

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It is a very impressive fact that the bond of love existing between the soldiers, who, shoulder to shoulder, guard and protect the interests and institutions of a country, is a bond inseverable.

Nevere explained himself no more fully, and Trent asked: "Nevere, what am I that is more than a soldier?"

"A man," replied Nevere calmly; then, looking askance at Trent, he said, with an interrogative, though kindly smile and intonation: "You know what it is to be a man? I shall answer for you, and say, 'Certainly I do.' Then I ask you again which is greater, to be a man or to be a soldier?"

An hour later a handsome landau, drawn by a splendid span of black horses, dashed off the Boulevard Malesherbes. In the landau were Lady Trent and her son, on their return from the studio of Nevere.

"Ah," said Lady Trent, "I can not exactly explain why, but I have always felt that this Julia Pembroke was more than an ordinary American girl."

"Yes, mother; I have heard you make that observation before."

"She must be a descendant of some early English colonist to the States—some member of a titled family, who perhaps went to the gold fields of California. I am glad she has gotten this fortune. I should prefer seeing her married than a singer, for she seems peculiarly fitted to make an efficient wife."

Then she looked out at the side of the carriage on which her boy sat, that she might see if he was especially interested, and she thought that he was. Trent was fearless as he was brave, and if he himself had known his mind regarding Julia, he would quickly have told his mother the exact situation. As it was, he only remained quiet.



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"You have met thousands of young women, my son. Have you never thought that you preferred one woman above others?"

"No, mother dear, I have never found a woman like my mother, and I can not marry until I do. I enjoy the society of many ladies of many nationalities, but I have yet to find the woman whom I could love and at the same time ask you, mother dear, to accept as your daughter."

While saying this he held his mother's hand with a lover's warmth of feeling, and when he had finished speaking he kissed it reverently.

"Ah! you must not look for perfection, my son, and I do think that at your age it is natural you should begin to take upon yourself the duties, the honors and the privileges of all who organize that little community—the home—which is the unit upon the collection of which units our kingdom is built and maintained."

"Yes, mother; I have often thought to attempt, but I have always deferred, until I feel inadequate to the cause."

"It is a great cause, my child, and should receive your careful consideration. I hope during this visit home you may find some congenial young woman who may become the wife of my Reginald."

"I'll try, mother."

"Very well, my son; that is all you can do; but do not be too particular."

"Mother, I want a wife who will fill the position of wife to the soldier Trent."

"She need not be different from the woman who would fill the position of wife of Reginald Trent, were he Lord Trent."

"No, I understand, mother, but"—

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"God bless you, my boy, and may you choose your wife with as much discretion as a general would his forces for duty at a most valued position."

"What if I should choose an American, mother?"

Lady Trent looked at him quickly, but his face was smiling broadly, and she judged it to be only a pleasantry, such as those in which he frequently indulged.

"It might not be objectionable," she replied; "but I think our dear, little, all-sufficient island has upon it some sweet English maiden, whose charms and whose character can not but satisfy the most exacting demands Reginald Trent and his mother may make."

"Don't be uneasy, mother; I have no relish for American women—unless they come to Europe, and profit when they do come. As they are in the raw state, I have never seen one who was not snobbish, or silly, or coarse, when not vulgar."

"Oh, Reginald; what do you think of Julia Pembroke?"

"Julia is different—she came to Europe, has lived here six years and has profited under the influence and customs of the polite society of Europe—and, mother, I judge she owes much of her success in correct deportment to the advice of Madame Cinati, who would tell her something as to how she should deport herself."

"My son, Julia Pembroke has studied etiquette in the finest convent in Europe, and she still goes there every week. She knows Baronne Staffe's book on etiquette from beginning to end.

"Well, mother, I think favorably of Miss Pembroke, but I had not given her the slightest consideration in the light of a possible successor to my mother."

"I am quite sure that for some unaccountable reason I am particularly pleased with her, and now, should she be as rich as Monsieur has heard, she is certainly a mag-

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net for some aspiring child of the titled world. Her wealth may bolster up some poor, decayed estate, if the family itself is beyond reclaim, and, in return, Julia can have a twinkling coronet, with all its encumbrments, which, to a cultivated American girl of Julia Pembroke's type, would be worse than death," commented Lady Trent.

"I may see fit to offer her mine, before some other European, less fortunate than myself, succeeds in selling his trumpery to her." And Trent laughed at his garburity, lightly given.

Lady Trent smiled, and said, thoughtfully: "We will look around among our own people first; afterwards we may consider our kith from beyond the sea. Now I shall run up to see Julia and hear from her the truth or falsity of Nevere's bit of news."

"Very well, mother; I'll not go."

The carriage had driven in at the great gates, and the footman had opened the door. Trent got out and gave Julia's number, and the beautiful dull-black creatures pranced gaily around the pink marble fountain in the center of the court, then out as the iron doors swung back for their exit.

Trent lit his choice Havana and drew up a cozy arm-chair close to the pretty little fire, blazing upon the carefully tended hearth, all the while thinking: "With a mother brave enough to lead her son as my mother led me to think of my duty as an Englishman, I am safe. Such a woman can not have a foolish son. She did it so sweetly, so gently, yet so certainly, that I was led to thinking seriously upon the subject without at all suspecting she was learning just where and how I stood with regard to my choice of a life companion. Mother, mother, I shall never betray your trust in me. I shall marry a woman of whom you will approve." He paused,

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his manner grew animated— "Though Madame Nitolsk is a very attractive woman, in and of herself, I should find it impossible to place her as my mother is now placed. No, though taken alone she is pleasing and capable of arousing some sort of warmth, I could never think of her as a possible wife."

He arose, laid the unfinished cigar upon the smoking-tray, then started to walk around the room; as was his habit when having some matter of weight under consideration.

"No, I will not think of her; I will not visit her again."

He was resolved as to this. Well for Lieutenant Trent that Madame Nitolsk was not near, for were she he would not so calmly buckle on his armor and fly from the enemy's country; but she was not in close touch, and her influence seldom went beyond her presence. With Julia Pembroke all was different. He felt certain that he could love her devotedly; but he knew that Hampton Alverstone was not a little enamored of her charms, for this he had seen on the evening at the Opéra. But, then, Alverstone was a plain American, and Julia might be like many of her countrywomen—anxious to possess a title. In this he could surpass Alverstone, for he, Reginald Trent, could introduce her to the best of European aristocracy, and he could ask her to become the wife of Sir Reginald Trent, heir to the earldom of Essexby, descendant of one of the noblest families of England, nephew of Prince and Princesse de Loire, one of the mediæval houses of France, and brother of the Duchess of Strasburg, whose social position in Germany was consequently very high. He could introduce her to all the polite society of England and on the Continent as well. And his mother's consent was almost assured, for

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a strong mutual friendship existed between his mother and Miss Pembroke.

When to his worth should be added what Julia Pembroke was able to give—the innate charm, the inherent worth—and the unexcelled accomplishments of herself, he felt he could present her as his wife in any court in the world. And to her personal charm she could add great wealth, which fact enhanced the situation much. Though the Trents had always possessed enough for the discharge of every duty devolving upon them, the great wealth to which Nevere said Julia was now heir was surely no objection.

He speculated not upon the mill wherein the fortune of Julia might have been gristed. He lit another Havana and sat down again. He would not tell Alverstone of this news of Julia Pembroke's fortune. For, though Alverstone had great wealth himself, there was no telling how much more he would be glad to have. No, he would look into this matter, and perhaps before he should return to India he might be able to tell his mother that at last he had chosen his wife.

He sat and smoked for some little time, when his eye chanced to fall upon a letter on a tiny tray upon the oak stand near by. He looked more closely and saw it was a letter from some one in mourning. He arose, picked it up and read that it was for himself. On opening, he read an invitation from Madame Nitolsk for a *réveillon*.

"Mr. Alverstone to see Lieutenant Trent," announced the butler.

"Show him in here, John," said Trent, in reply to their old English butler, whom they always took with them on journeys to Paris.

As Alverstone entered, Trent went toward him and put out his hand, saying: "Glad to see you, Alverstone."

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I have been sitting here alone, smoking, dozing and at the same time under the spell of a reflective mood."

Alverstone laughed quietly, and then said: "Perhaps it were better that I should not intrude upon such an hour."

"On the contrary, Alverstone, I am glad you came. Here is a fine chair; it is the especial delight of my uncle when he smokes and looks at the fire," said Trent, laughing. "Now, you be the Prince. Do you ever smoke Havanas? These are fine ones."

"No," said Alverstone; "I prefer cigarettes."

"In that case they are here, too," and Trent opened his pocket-case, and soon they were smoking, as if that were the business of life.

"I just had an invitation from Madame Nitolsk," remarked Trent, handing Alverstone the invitation. "Of course, you got one?"

"Yes, I did; but I can not accept, for I shall be in Belgium on that date."

"In the States, I presume, you do not have Christmas parties after this fashion?"

"No," answered Alverstone; "at least, not the Protestant portion of us. Let me see. Here the guests attend the Opéra or the theater or some church and then go to some party at midnight—is that it?"

"Yes, that is the fashion here."

Between pretty rings and fleecy clouds and puffs, all made of dainty, ethereal smoke, they put little pleasantries and friendly converse, until Alverstone suddenly remembered an engagement he had at that hour. He said as much and got up to go.

Trent took out his watch and said: "Yes, it is"—

"What a fine charm!" interrupted Alverstone, laying hold on a gold lyre. He looked up at Trent and said: "Where did you get this?"

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Trent was dashed for an instant, and, not wishing to tell that he had it from Madame Nitolsk, was at a loss as to what he should make answer. He looked sternly at Alverstone for a moment, and he thought he detected an unpleasant humor in his friend. He was certain it must be that the sight of the lyre had caused it. Perhaps Alverstone had seen it in Madame Nitolsk's possession.

"You have seen it before?" questioned Trent.

"No, I think not," replied Alverstone.

"I'll tell you of it some future time," said Trent.

Alverstone turned and went toward the door.

## CHAPTER XI.

As Lady Trent approached the door of Julia's apartment, she heard her singing softly a part from the duet of the fourth act of "Roméo and Juliet," while accompanying herself upon the piano.

Julia answered the ring and Lady Trent was given a very cordial reception.

"I have come to fetch you to dinner," said Lady Trent, after due exchange of conversation. "We can not accept a refusal."

"I should be happy to do so," said Julia, leading Lady Trent to a comfortable chair, which she drew before the fire; then she adjusted a screen that might shield Lady Trent from the force of the bed of living coals.

"Let me remove your furs," said Julia.

"No, I must not remain long. You will go with me?"

"I am sorry, but I can not, Lady Trent. I must study this fourth act carefully, for the maestro knows to a nicety if I study much or little."

"Do enjoy yourself, child; do not study so hard. With that great fortune you ought not think of a career. You might pardon me, Julia, for I love you dearly, if I have known you but five days, and I would advise you as would a devoted mother."

Seeing Julia about to speak, she put up her hand in token of silence on Julia's part, while she went on: "When I was your age I hoped for a career."

Lady Trent ceased speaking and looked at Julia, who stared in unconcealable amazement.

"Yes," she went on, in a bright manner, which gave no evidence of regrets for the abandonment of her youth-



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ful hopes: "I hoped to be a voice teacher; I wished to be just such a one as is the celebrated Madame Mathilde Marchesi. You know her?" she interrogated.

"Oh, yes, I have attended some of her auditions," replied Julia.

"She was my inspiration. I felt that were I to do for London what she has done for Paris, I should be the happiest woman on earth; with this difference, however, I wished to remain single, for it occurred to my mind that a family and its cares might interfere with the success of my school of song."

"I knew you were a great patron of our art," replied Julia; "but, truly, I had no idea you cared for it so much as that."

"No, few could think of me as interested in anything like a career, I know. But had I followed my girlhood notions I should not be the mother of a soldier boy, nor of a splendid girl, both of whom are all I could desire; and, too, there is such an indescribable, such a supreme, happiness in being the loved wife of some good man. The better he is the better the condition. Of course, there are many marriages which prove sad trials to both husband and wife, and some that are utter failures; but that should constitute no reason for one preferring celibacy to married life, not a whit more than that persons should decide not to live at all, because some persons are afflicted with a mild disease and others are sorely afflicted, peradventure unto death, with an incurable malady."

Suddenly rising, she said: "Then you think you can not go with me?"

"I thank you very much, Lady Trent, and I regret my inability to accept; but I can not to-day," replied Julia.

"You will come some other day, soon, will you not?" said Lady Trent, allowing Julia to adjust her furs.

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"But," said Julia, while fastening the furs, still holding to the clasp and looking coaxingly into Lady Trent's eyes, "you will tell me where or of whom you learned of my news from America?"

"Monsieur Nevere told me," answered Lady Trent.

"Monsieur Nevere!" repeated Julia, in consternation, for this was a stroke, indeed. "Monsieur Nevere! Why, how could he know it?" exclaimed Julia, as much to herself as to her visitor; for she was running through her mind the thread by which it were possible that he should know it. A lawyer, she thought, was in duty bound to keep secret, matters pertaining to a client's affairs, at least affairs which had not become public.

"Monsieur Nevere's butler has a cousin in the office of your attorney," explained Lady Trent, "and the butler told Monsieur Nevere that the office boy had overheard the attorney say that you had a great fortune left you."

"I must see Monsieur at once," said Julia, decidedly, "and I shall ask him not to disclose this to any one else."

"Why?" asked Lady Trent.

"It is a difficult matter," said Julia, warmly, "for a girl with much money to be able to sing. I have found here that the persons who have money find it impossible to interest the teachers in their voices."

"Why, how strange! Are you sure this is quite true?" said Lady Trent, in hushed surprise.

"I have seen this to be the case during all my years of study. To be successful in musical circles one must have influence, and to have those in power interested in one there must be an appearance of limited means."

"Well, well! that is dealing in art for art's sake alone."

"I presume not," answered Julia; "but I think, on close observation it will be proven that I have spoken the

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truth. My teacher is very much interested in me now, but I should not like to take my chances were he to learn that I might inherit much money."

Lady Trent's fine eyes sparkled with a happy light.

"I do not wish to be inquisitive, but may I ask from whom you inherit this fortune?"

"It is from the estate of a bachelor uncle in Cincinnati, who left eighty millions, together with the income from the gold mines in California. These latter were the property of my father. I had a stepmother, but she and her children died of a fever, so that I am sole heir to my father's estate. No one except father ever thought these gold mines would yield much profit, but three years ago, my attorney in Chicago reports, they became quite valuable."

"That is very nice, I am sure," said Lady Trent, quietly; for, though much pleased with Julia's good fortune, especially with her great fortune, she betrayed by no outward sign that she was unspeakably happy with this new argument in favor of Miss Pembroke when next the subject of Reginald's marriage should be broached.

Lady Trent went out very well satisfied with the result of her visit. She was not a woman of the busy-body order; but she was at present especially interested in the welfare of two beings whom she loved—the one with a mother's undying love, the other with a love more than that of friendly interest. She told herself—for she was a clever woman—that she thought she would like to see her son married to just such a woman, but that, naturally, deep down in her nature there lay a preference for an English woman with Julia Pembroke's character.

When Alverstone left the mansion of Prince de Loire, Lieutenant Trent was certain that he had quite a formid-

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able rival in the person of Hampton Alverstone. He decided that he must be up and on duty if he would accomplish the desired end he now had in view. Yes, he would go to Nevere and ask the artist to take him along when he went to the Maestro Novara's to play for Miss Pembroke.

It is strange, but, knowing the line along which one mind will work to gain a certain result, the line along which all minds are likely to work to gain that same point is assuredly known.

Trent at once had decided to pursue exactly the same course as that followed by Alverstone when he had sought means by which to be in intimate relation with Julia Pembroke. So Trent put off in haste to see Nevere.

When Trent entered Nevere's studio he was greeted in a hearty manner. It was Nevere's custom to make all who entered his apartments remember him—Nevere, the great portrait painter—not for his art alone, but as well for that blessed characteristic—brilliant amiability. No one could soon forget the sunny disposition with which he brightened the world of those who came into his home.

Trent took a seat beside him and watched Nevere work, for he was putting the finishing touches to a portrait of a Madame Sternman, of New York.

After many topics were discussed and artistic remarks passed there was a lull in the conversation. Nevere kept steadily touching the portrait, while Trent watched him.

After a period of marked silence Trent spoke. "Do you think you can take me to hear you and Miss Pembroke when you play for her at the maestro's? You see, I should love to hear her sing, and the old fellow will not allow her to sing for any one at all. If I hear her—and I am anxious to hear her voice—I must hear her at the master's during lesson hour."

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"No," said Nevere, curtly; "I tried that once, and I assure you I'll not try it again, for it was very illy received by Novara. I dare not attempt it again."

"Some Miss to see Monsieur Nevere," said the butler, who had entered and stood a little inside the door.

"Miss who, Paul?"

"I do not know, Monsieur," weakly replied the chagrined domestic.

"Show the Mademoiselle into the *salon* and I'll be there instantly."

Paul departed, and Nevere, suiting the action to the word, entered his boudoir, and, laying off his working jacket, donned his coat. As he came out of the boudoir he said: "Here, Trent, paint until I return. I shall not be away long." He laughed lightly at his joke, but Trent, as if taking a command from a superior officer, took up several brushes and tubes of paint. Then adjusting the palette over his thumb, with the agility of a trained soldier in the heyday of manly strength he mounted the scaffolding in front of a large painting standing to one side of the room, and upon which Nevere had as yet put only a few hours' work. He began to paint vigorously, imitating every motion of an earnest artist.

Nevere paused to laugh, which he did heartily, and then passed out in a happy humor to meet the Miss "Somebody"—the miss with the name which had proved the Waterloo of the French butler's strife with the English language.

As soon as the portières had fallen together behind Nevere, Trent's mind took on exclusively the thoughts which stirred every portion of the gray matter of his brain. Now that Nevere refused to take him to hear Julia, and as he could not trust to the chance meetings in society, he must meet her at her daily work. This

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was the only course to pursue. He would ask Nevere who her language teacher was, and her other teachers. In that way he might have a chance meeting. "Pshaw!" he inwardly ejaculated; "I could storm and take a fort easily and quickly, but to storm a woman's heart—what a task, when the woman is of this type—the type my mother adores!"

He descended quickly from his seat at the top of the steps and walked toward a chair. When about to sit down his eyes fell upon the portrait of the little child, Adino, which portrait his mother had admired at her sitting. He stepped across and stood before it. While looking at Adino's portrait his eyes raised to the Oriental hanging behind, which hanging covered a life-sized portrait. With his right hand he lifted the drapery and saw the portrait of Madame Nitolsk. Her eyes were fastened upon him and burned into his very soul. He laid the drapery upon the frame, then stepped back to view the mother and child. He gazed long at the woman. "Yes, she has a strangely fascinating beauty, but I dare not love her. Mother, your verdict rings clear. She would not make a good wife for Reginald Trent."

"He turned abruptly. What was that? He could not help hearing. Who was speaking, and why was she here? It was the voice of Miss Pembroke. It came from the direction of the *salon*. It was very distinct. She must be near the door, where she had paused, no doubt, in the act of leave-taking.

"I will go along the hall and go out with her. Fine luck! fine, indeed. Now, Reginald Trent, be a soldier; be on duty!"

"Ah, Miss Pembroke, what an unexpected pleasure!" said Trent, as, hat in hand, he made Julia a salute.

Julia, smiling, responded in a ringing, cheery voice: "It is an unexpected pleasure to me, I assure you."

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"But I thought mother was with you."

"She was until a short time ago," replied Julia.

"But you were to return with her and take dinner with us."

"I regret much, but I could not. It would be delightful, I know. I had a lesson this hour, and I am on my way home."

"Do not study so hard, Miss Pembroke; you will spoil those beautiful eyes and wear out your nerves."

"I think not," said Julia; "when one loves one's work the pursuit of that work seldom injures the health." Then turning to Nevere, she asked: "This meets your approval, does it not, Monsieur Nevere?"

"You are quite right, Miss Pembroke," quickly replied Nevere; but the tone was more serious than the question had made necessary. It changed at once as he went on: "Lieutenant Trent, you must not discourage my song bird. I am anxious to play for Mademoiselle Pembroke when she sings at the Opéra, which is soon."

"You shall play for me, Monsieur Nevere," rejoined Julia, "and I shall sing, real soon, I think. I feel the master will let me sing before long, although he has set my début a year from now—next December."

"And are you thinking of another year's study, after staying with that exacting old man these six long years?" asked Trent.

"Sh—" said Julia, frowning and putting up her hand in signal of silence.

Trent found himself thinking seriously of her beauty, of her wealth and of her accomplishments.

"Good-bye, Monsieur Nevere; good evening, Lieutenant Trent," and Julia went out at the door, which the butler was holding open, and which she heard close as she went down the steps to the first floor.

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On her way home from a lesson in stage deportment Julia had gone to Monsieur Nevere's and had asked him not to mention to any one of her fortune. And she had told him that though the Trents did know, they would keep the secret, for she had asked Lady Trent to do so.

As she stepped out upon the sidewalk and started off at a brisk pace, Trent, who had come softly behind, stepped beside her and begged permission to walk with her.

Julia started, for she had not noticed his egress, and had supposed she was alone. An annoyed expression, unseen by Trent, flit across her face, but she did not allow it to rest there. She was very fond of Trent's parents, both for themselves and because they were very dear friends of Madame Cinati, and she would not be guilty of ungraciousness toward their son.

Julia and Trent walked on, Trent talking lively all the while. He was in a happy frame of mind. On turning round the church of St. Augustine, Julia saw the music store of *Grus*. When they had reached the store, she stopped, and so did Lieutenant Trent.

"I beg your pardon," she began, "but I am going in here to look for several pieces of music."

"I may go?" questioned Trent.

"No," objected Julia; "I shall be there some time, and I shall be engaged at a work which is very tedious."

"You are too serious," he said by way of answer.

He wondered if this was a hoax. At any rate, his mood was all changed from exhilaration to that of doggedness.

"Good evening, Miss Pembroke." He saluted and crossed the square, in the direction of the Rue la Boétie, while Julia entered the *Grus Magasin de Musique*.

Just across the street was the tall, slender figure of a very carefully groomed man, moving slowly. One who



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might notice him would have judged him to be a person without an objective point in view, for he was moving so slowly that something of great interest to him must be found somewhere in this neighborhood. Had the observer been keener, he had seen that the pair who had parted at the entrance to the music store had kindled a fire in his eye which gave evidence of intense emotion within. By a bit of insistence on the part of the onlooker it were further seen that an artist, wishing to portray jealousy, would offer great inducements to this young man, whose entire being now took on the air of a man out from whose life had gone the last ray of hope. It was not jealousy alone that drew, twisted and distorted horribly every fibre of every muscle and every nerve of the lone stranger. It was a combination of two emotions, either of which destroys entirely the being into whose soul it enters.

The sculptor Vela, who, in order to get those strong lines of Napoleon's blasted hopes, caused his betrothed to aid him, by telling her at a moment of blissful trust that she trusted in a faithless lover, might have spared that beautiful fiancée had he found Hampton Alverstone, as he stood gazing out the broad street after the vanishing Lieutenant Trent.

Alverstone gazed long after Trent—Trent, the debonaire soldier—Trent, the gallant lover—Trent, the man of rank—Trent, the idol of all women. This was the man whom fate had given him for a rival, and a rival upon whom success was an attendant. To Alverstone it were maddening to contemplate the probability of Julia Pembroke's marriage with another.

Why should not this Englishman seek his wife among his own class? At any rate, among those of his own nationality? And why should it be that he himself should have met so many hundreds of American girls, whose

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fond mammas had evinced their willingness as plainly as had "Barkis"? Yes, he had met these beautiful creatures, so happy in giving him pleasure, and yet not until he had met this hard student of song—this ardent chaser of a career—had he been touched by the charms of femininity—felt himself imprisoned—totally incapable of extricating himself.

A little French child, hopping on one foot, looked up at him for time enough to see that he was not happy. A woman—with a chair inverted upon her head, moved by that peculiarly sympathetic feeling which the French are quick to express for one they suspect of being in distress, stopped the shrill cry of her trade—for she was a chair mender, and loudly called her trade in the streets—and, turning her eyes upon Alverstone, gave him compassionate notice. She knew not for what, but he was a man in distress, and she gave him that much assistance.

Perhaps—who knows?—that these little unknown sympathies do not very materially aid one's progress through many a slough of despond. We pray for the blessing of God upon our lives, and who knows that this blessing does not consist in one's being continually environed by influences such as these which now surrounded Alverstone?

The child, pausing in its play; the working-woman, leaving for a time that which to her was her livelihood, both drawn toward him by the unhappiness depicted in face and mien, could not but set at liberty some strange influence which, though in a mysterious manner, just the same did operate for the easement of Alverstone's fierce feeling.

He wondered why it was that the terrible load which had almost threatened self-destruction had suddenly lifted and as suddenly slipped away.

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When Julia left the music store the air had cleared, as is its manner in that Parisian climate, for it does clear as by magic, and she thought she would walk home. She was not thinking of Trent, nor of Alverstone, but of a beautiful child she had seen in the store. He had looked at her with a pair of large, black eyes, the like of which she had never seen, and which she was sure she could never quite forget. How could she, when they seemed two wells of a luminous depth, and they were unfathomable? She had never looked into eyes of a beauty so rare—eyes which seemed living organisms, fully capable of carrying on an individual existence, without dependence upon vital organs. His hair was a mass of long blue black curls, reaching almost to his waist. His skin, a rich olive, with no tinge of red. The mouth, though small, yet carried in its rose-leaf-shaped lips that alluring charm which such treasures always hide.

Julia had looked long at the child, for she had been seated at a table on which the clerk had been arranging new musical compositions for her to examine, as was the custom in the music stores she frequented, and where she was known as a very promising lyric singer of the school of Maestro Novara.

There had been quite a little flirtation, for the child had been much pleased with the large, sympathetic blue eyes, set in the white face, enlivened with the pretty glow of healthy pink upon the cheeks, surrounded by a halo of gold in the arrangement of the beautiful hair seen in soft silken rolls.

"I wish I had spoken to him. He certainly was far beyond the order or orders of children I have known. There was something about him that reminded me of some one I have met."

Then her healthy, elastic mind traveled on, from the little boy to that other stage of a boy's existence—that

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stage in which if a woman fails to recognize the boy in the man, at least to recognize the boy before her, she is guilty of an unpardonable misdemeanor.

Why was it that to her Trent seemed no stranger? She had never felt the least strangeness when near him. It never occurred to her to entertain for him any feeling unlike that one should have for another related by ties of blood. Her thoughts took on the color of pretty attentions shown her by other young men with whom she had come in contact, either through the medium of study or when with Madame Cinati; but no one of them had ever had power to tempt her away from the goal she had set as the mark at which to aim.

Then that subtle fluid which governs each little world of each person, as well as the great world in which all move—thought—sped on, on to that other person who had so lately entered within the circle of her busy life—a life which she had mapped out, and which she intended following, without the slightest change, to the end; yet, as all who observe know, there are few lives, indeed, which show no change, no shifting, from the original scheme.

Ah!" thought Julia; there was the exception; she knew it. It was he—this young American. This, to her notion, perfection in man. She must not think of him or art would vanish; for love, like sickness, eats up ambition.

Julia had had suitors, for lyric singers like herself always do. But it was not for this rare voice alone that she had been thus importuned, though who would not seek a nightingale which sang at the gates of Paradise?

One of those whom she had refused was the Prince di Pastanni. He was the dark Roman prince whom Alverstone had found with Julia at the Trents' *soirée*.

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His expressed devotion had been as intense as was his nature, which was strong. He had proposed to her on the evening of a dinner party given by Madame Cinati, some two years since. Afterwards, though the prince had made Julia feel this silent adoration whenever they chanced to meet, this regard was never annoying, and they had continued to be acquaintances.

Then, too, there had been a certain Russian nobleman, with a fine, deep basso voice. He had studied with the Maestro Novara when Julia had first entered the school. He had boldly declared his love for her, but she had been deaf to all his entreaties. His type had not appealed to her in the least. The beautiful pathos of his voice had spoken to her, and she had listened. But it had passed as a wild rhapsody that, heard for the first time, is too vast, and glides through the memory and is lost. But this basso had not always remained a student of voice.

One day, about three years after her entrance into the maestro's school, she had found the old master very sad, and when he had read part of a letter, just received, tears had come into his eyes and had overflowed down his cheeks. The Russo-Japanese war had broken out and the artist-pupil with the deep basso voice was leaving for the front. The master had shaken his head and had said: "He is on his way to be killed or to die. His voice! his career! Oh, art! how multiform are the obstacles that beset the pathway of those who would reach thy shrine!"

And now at this moment, as Julia walked quickly up the Avenue de Friedland, she was not thinking of these suitors of the past, but of one who now disturbed her every thought. It was a sweet annoyance, though she tried to tell herself otherwise. This was the one person for whom she felt as she had never before felt

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for any man—that mysterious intoxication of the heart which makes the soul quiver.

From the first time she had looked across the table in the Hôtel Cecil, London, and had seen the stranger facing her, she had loved him. She had fought this emotion vigorously—fought it as for her very life; yet her thoughts would travel in that direction, and she had no power to control them—she felt swallowed up—she felt hopelessly lost—lost beyond reclaim to her art, for she told herself that a man like Hampton Alverstone, who had only a passing interest in song, would never permit his wife to go on with the work, without which she felt she—Julia Pembroke—could not exist.

No, she would cast out all thoughts of this man; but she would acknowledge to herself, and to herself solely, that no woman ever loved a man with a more genuine love than this which she entertained for him.

No, she would think no more of him. She was a strong character, and always did as she thought best.

Here she came out on the Champs Elysées, and was reminded of the first time she had seen it. It had been on a beautiful afternoon. The sun had been warming and gladdening the thousands of men and women enjoying a promenade, and the hundreds of little folks, trotting bravely by the side of the hurrying nurses and the other little ones playing at ball, hoop or some other of the numerous little games in which the child nature delights to move. To Julia it had been a memorable event—that first sight of this great avenue. This great gulf stream, which has an unnatural voice. For it is its throng that is the great vocal cord of this artificial organ; its movement, its vast lungs; but the propeller—the mind of this immense voice—is not unnatural; it is human; it is the volitions of a city of peoples, and that

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is why the voice is unnatural; it is man's work. God alone creates the natural.

And yet, what a sameness there is in this great gay capital. To-day she saw on her walk home, and especially upon the Champs Elysées Avenue, just what she had seen upon that first day in Paris, and just what she had seen every day for the past two thousand days which she had spent in the vast metropolis.

Yet on this particular day it occurred to her keen intellect, that to-day she might register as another day, which, when viewed from some distant point in life's picture, would equal, if not surpass, that memorable day when she had first seen the Champs Elysées Avenue. To-day marked a great struggle, for when a strong woman loves and then decides that for art's sake she can not marry, that is a turning point, not only in that woman's career, but in that woman's influence for eternity.

As Julia entered the hall of her apartment house, on La Pérouse, and passed into the inner hall, the concierge came out and handed her a letter.

This concierge was an unusually pretty French woman, and very gracious on all occasions. Her lodge was at the end of the inner hall, from which she had but to look through the glass doors and see all who entered the building.

One door of the concierge's lodge was always closed, and behind it was placed a stand, upon which at most hours of the day could be found a very beautiful Angora cat—Yalu by name. He had been given that name because he had come to live with the concierge at the time of that victory in the Russo-Japanese war, during the year 1904. Yalu was a very intelligent cat, and was on duty during most of the day. No one came in at the

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great front doors or descended the great staircase but Yalu, whether awake or napping, arose and quickly reported on his self-imposed duty, and, sitting up, stealthily put back the curtain with his paw. Then he would look out to see what was going on, and if anything unusual was occurring, he manifested uneasiness; otherwise, he blinked and smiled and continued to rock and nod on.

When Julia was in her own room she went directly to the window, for the daylight was fast waning. She opened the letter and read. It was an invitation from Madame Nitolsk to be present at a *réveillon* Saturday night at her residence, on Rue Caumartin. Should she accept this invitation? She liked this young widow. When they had first met in the conservatory at the Trents' *soirée*, Julia had told herself there was something of a disturbing nature—something hidden—about this beautiful face. But after meeting her several times during the past two days this unpleasantness had seemed to vanish, and the sad tenderness of her languid eyes had sought Julia's sympathy and had gained it.

But now, if she went to this *réveillon*, whose hostess was a friend of so short a time, she should meet others who would be just as gracious, just as acceptable, and in the course of time she should have to go to their social functions, as she had to Madame Nitolsk's. No, she would not accept this invitation. She could not be a gossamer creature and live for that shimmering mirage—society.

As Julia stood in the gathering twilight, looking out through the casement window upon the balcony beyond, there was a far-away look in her eye and a sadness, half delightful, seemed to breathe from her and settle like a mystic cloak around her, as it often does when one is on the eve of an eventful change. It was as a premoni-



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tion, an instinctive foretelling, that is delectable because it is unknown.

A chill seemed to creep over her. She turned quickly from the window and went into the boudoir. A strong draft of air blew in at the window. She waved her hand, as if judging the temperature. The room seemed cold. She went to the open window, but the outside air was soft and caressingly gentle. Putting one foot on the balcony, she stood in the shadow of the deep casement, with one small white hand against a side of the open window. From this second balcony a fine view of La Pérouse, Avenue d'Iéna and a part of the circling Rue de Presbourg was presented. She looked around her at the buildings, which speak not only of comfort, but of luxury. She saw fine carriages drawn by prancing horses and palatial automobiles flying swiftly down Avenue d'Iéna. Two dirty urchins, one a girl, the other a boy, passed over on the avenue. They were swarthy creatures, with large black eyes and blue black ringlets, that stuck out in irregular bunches from under battered felt hats. Every now and then they stopped and counted the sous which they had gained. Then the girl's laugh could be heard, and they passed on, out of view of the second balcony. A priest passed up the Rue La Pérouse; he wore the customary frock, and he was reading his prayer book. A woman, driving a four-in-hand tandem, raced up the small street; she was as smartly unnatural as were the overdocked tails of her horses. Her footman, who perched behind, was taking a bird's-eye view of the city. Evidently they were returning from the Bois, for by this time it was half after four, and all the fashion of Paris had left the Bois and its avenue.

This was Paris; this was its life. Paris is a being—a people created it, and it breathes and exists like another being. Paris, like man, has a soul—its soul is its people.

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Paris has more than some men; it has an inner voice—for the mind of its people is its conscience.

Julia's quick, sensitive ear caught the sound of a small fearful voice, which pleaded through violent sobs: Don't whip me, papa; don't, don't, pa—pa,—pa—pa, papa—pa—pa"—

Julia forgot all decorum and went out on the balcony and leaned over the balustrade. There was a vendor of artichoke and green peas, who had stopped his cart near the curbing, just under her balcony, and was shaking a small creature, which shrank at each shake until it looked like a very dwarfed urchin or a very overgrown rat.

"That's a nice way—lose half my earnings—wait till we get home—and—and—and I'll give you more."

The irate voice of the vendor rose higher and sharper at each word.

"Papa—papa—pa—pa"—wailed the small voice. "I did not see it—some one must have"—

"Yes—you—some one must have stolen it—no one steals from vendors—you rascal," and, loosening his grip of the child's coat, he cuffed first on one side and then on the other, until the little one went backward unsteadily, and the father started up the street with his cart. Still sobbing violently, the child began to turn his pockets inside out. Nothing was to be found. He turned and looked down the street, but no one was coming. He was early learning the hard fact that money runs after no one, be it king or beggar, saint or culprit.

The child wrung his hands as the angry voice of the father called after him to hasten on. Trembling piteously, and as if remembering a duty, he crossed himself and started up the street.

Just then a two-franc piece rang on the pavement. The child gave a start, for there lay his two-franc piece.

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It had been dislodged from his clothing in some way. The little one was too interested in the two-franc piece to notice that this two-franc piece was not the lost one, and that a figure upon the second balcony above had heard and seen everything, and had thrown down the bright new two-franc piece.

In delight he grabbed at it with two small hands, and so eagerly that he seemed afraid it would run away or might not be real. He looked at it over and over; it looked like his two-franc piece. Every muscle drew back in a stiff tension and his jaw opened wide. The lips drew up and back and showed the teeth. The knitted spot between the eyebrows smoothed out, for he was smiling.

"Papa, papa," cried the small voice; "here it is; I found it. Wait, papa; here is the two-franc piece." And he ran off up La Pérouse.

Julia forgot where she was and that it was not dark, in looking after the child and the vendor. Just then a horseman coming off the avenue on to La Pérouse saw the girlish figure leaning over the balcony. He knew who she was, but he would not put his horse to a run, as had been his intention, for he wished to bow to her.

The patter of a horse's feet arrested her attention, and Julia was conscious that some one was coming up the street. Instinctively she drew back into the shadow of the deep casement.

The rider lifted his hat and smiled. But his smile was a searching one. Julia saw the upward movement of the hand, and so looked again. It was Hampton Alverstone, and she answered with a graceful inclination of the head and a pleasing smile. Though an enchanting light shone in her eye, the rider did not see it, for the twilight shadows were fast gathering; but what he

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did see was sufficient, for when she had recognized him the hot color had suffused itself over the usually clear pink of the cheek, and the searching expression of his smile became a look of contentment, for the rising of deep color and the upward turn and parting of lips are potently allusive signs.

## CHAPTER XII.

On this particular morning—Friday, almost noon—Madame Nitolsk sat in her boudoir. This boudoir was a veritable picture of what one finds as the boudoir of those who would fain imitate Oriental furnishings. Beautiful Oriental rugs upon the floor, divans, cabinets, tables, draperies—all of Oriental design and workmanship.

Rose-colored silk curtains hung at the windows, Oriental knickknacks filled every table, stand, cabinet and cranny. Cushions of unsurpassed beauty of elegance and of costliness were scattered everywhere. And enlivening the atmosphere was a most deliciously exhilarating scent of some powerful perfume—also Oriental. In truth, one might have mistaken the place for the boudoir of some princess of India, who had taken into her head to add touches wholly European to those known to be entirely Oriental.

But by one who has traveled beyond the boundary of his own little farm or town, and who has seen the real woman of India or other Oriental lands, Madame Nitolsk would not be mistaken for a woman of those climes. But she was a fitting gem in that suggestively insinuating setting. She was dressed in a very close-fitting, claret-colored silk Princess dress, with a train of unusual length. The dress was cut high at the back of the neck, while the front was carried low down to a point, showing the chest some three or four inches below the line where the neck and the chest meet. The only touch of the dressmaker's skill that gave evidence of the dress being one for the use of the boudoir alone was the long, flowing sleeve, which, to suit the notion of Madame Nitolsk, was tighter than should be from the

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shoulder to the elbow, thus showing, as did the Princess gown, the exact form of the part it so closely fit. Then from the elbow the sleeve hung open and was longer and fuller than ever had been any sleeve of that fashion, but this was in keeping with her character, for everything must be morbidly exaggerated.

Around her throat was a necklace of a collection of various gems, and it was fastened by two large clasps of dull gold, studded all over with priceless gems. Around the left arm was a bracelet to match, and clasped so tightly that the band sank deep into the pretty, well-rounded arm. Beautiful gems flashed from both hands, while upon her feet were to be seen dainty pointed slippers of a rich satin, embroidered in a design and after a fashion known only to the art of embroidery in the Orient. The hair, which was rolled up from the face, from the back, from the sides, and caught by jeweled combs, confining every strand so artistically that the circle formed by the joining of the separate gem-studded combs, together with the very smooth black hair, formed, as it were, a cap at the crown of the head. The dress, the jewels, style of coiffure, the color scheme throughout, all told the character of the woman as plainly as any word picture could possibly have done.

She sat there, seemingly reading a novel, but in reality she was not reading a novel, but trying to read one. She closed the book after several ineffectual attempts to center her attention upon the doings of some morbid character therein, which at another time would have been most agreeable. But the morbidity of her own nature served to quiet the most exacting desires for such characters. No fiction was strong as the novel at this time presenting itself in the form of her plan of action, of which she was one of the principals, though not the heroine. At last she threw aside the book and let her

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eyes rest upon a letter which lay upon a small, onyx stand close by her side. Her lip curled in scorn, and had she been a whit less guarded, she would have let slip a growl of hatred. As it was, only the fierce tightening of the muscles told that a deadly hatred burned within her soul, and that the sight of this letter was sufficient to endanger the reason of one more delicately organized.

She took up the harmless bit of writing paper and again read the regret. She thought, in scorn: "Yes, Hampton Alverstone has manufactured this excuse. He intends to go to Belgium on that day, for no reason but that he might be able to send regrets instead of an acceptance."

She remembered how often within the past few days, when she had met him, walking, riding, driving—no difference how or where—he had avoided her. Her heart was sore at the thought of it, but she was not the sort of woman to submit calmly to defeat. No, indeed, she would make this man love her, she hissed in thought; at least he should never marry that Julia. She clutched at her dress just over her heart and thought on. And thoughts in the brain of such women as Madame Nitolsk are dangerous and deadly, and often mean the bite of the serpent or the sting of the adder. In truth, such women study by day and by night how best they may carry out their nefarious schemes, in which they take a special interest; and the deeper the affair carries them into the morbid fields of action the better they are satisfied. Such women are at all times dangerous, and should never be permitted to enter sacred precincts of heart or home.

Madame Nitolsk's love for Hampton Alverstone was great, to be sure, but her hatred of an unsuspecting person—quite guiltless of doing a wrong—was stronger. She stopped not for reason to guide her as to where she

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should strike for the offender. She knew that Hampton Alverstone loved the young American, for on that dreadful night—at the Trents'—she had heard his declaration of undying love, and, of course, judging Julia by herself, she argued that he would not have done this had not Julia led him to do so.

After all Madame Nitolsk's studies in the ways and means by which, scientifically or otherwise, such women attract men, she had never yet known the exquisite joy—the right of womanly woman—in having a lover sue for her hand in marriage. Sad to say, she had spent years in her efforts to impress herself upon masculine notice. But Madame Nitolsk did not know this type of man to which Hampton Alverstone belonged. He cared nothing for the insincere in any walk of life. He enjoyed brightness of life and action, but not when divorced from goodness. For years in India Madame Nitolsk had tried to enslave the attentions of Hampton Alverstone, but could not. Since her husband's death she had tried to enslave the man himself, but this was another failure.

Her home in Paris was palatial. She had all that wealth could buy, and her mirror told her that she was far more than pretty—it told her that she possessed great beauty of her type, which type was the one most potent to her notion, and it told her that hidden far within herself lay the real secret of success in her especial line.

Then why should an ordinary girl, working for a career, be her successful rival? The thought was preposterous, maddening, and was sure to bring down upon her rival the pent-up hate such women are ever ready to pour out upon those who chance to block their way or in any wise oppose their plans.

In order that a more than acquaintanceship might exist between Julia and herself she had endured those



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lessons with the Maestro Novara. She knew that he disliked her and that he was likely to turn her out of his school almost any day. However, she had accomplished her purpose, for she thought she had made Julia an admirer, if not a trusting friend, and she was sure that Julia would come to her *réveillon*. True, this American singer had not yet sent in her acceptance, but she would do so. Madame Nitolsk understood how little leisure a student could have with such a master. What a persistent character Julia was, she thought, to study with that cross old man! She could hardly hold herself to him for a few days. To think of six years with him caused her imagination to stagger. No, she was not able to continue for long at any task. Indeed, she had never had a task in her life, unless it had been that of living with her husband after the first year. She had loved him at the time of marriage, but she had tired of him before the first year had gone by. In this she was like her class. No, indeed, not for long would she accept this Novara's arrangement that she must come at nine of the morning. To think of it was appalling. Why, she had to rise early, and she could not do that without spending an hour in a nap some time during the afternoon; else she must blink and blink all evening like an old owl. But—patience—patience—"who goes slowly goes surely"—the demon sang the old Italian proverb in at her ear. She listened and obeyed, as she had done many times before.

A stillness, only felt, always indescribable, seemed to pervade the room, while she herself might be dead and in the tomb so far as any sign of life was visible. She sat quite still, with her feet upon the cushion, her elbows resting upon the arms of the chair and her chin between her thumbs and forefingers, while her head strained forward as a panther when scenting its prey. The set eyes

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looked not on anything without, but seemed to be gloating over a scene pictured within her brain.

"Oh, Madame! Madame! Madame!" shrieked the nurse of Adino, as she ran into the room, wringing her hands. She was frantic with terror, and suddenly stopped, stood stark still and seemed to be unable to utter another word.

Madame Nitolsk ran quickly to her, and, taking hold of her arm, shook her repeatedly, crying: "Suzanne, what has happened? What is it? Speak! speak!" But the terrorized nurse remained as if stone dead. She seemed to be paralyzed. Madame Nitolsk wondered if the woman were mad.

"Suzanne," she commanded in a voice hoarse with fear, "Suzanne, speak!"

"Oh! Madame! Madame! oh! oh! oh!"—and the nurse was silent again and seemed to be speechless forever.

She shook all over, shook like a leaf, and her eyes started from their sockets.

"Suzanne," cried Madame Nitolsk, "what is it?"

"Adino is dead!" screamed the half-paralyzed woman, and with this great effort she grew purple in the face and fell backward upon a pile of cushions.

"Dead! Oh, my God! dead!" shrieked Madame Nitolsk, and her hands clutching distractedly at either side of her head, still shrieking "Dead! dead!" she rushed out of her boudoir up to the bedroom of her little son.

His nurse was a woman some forty years old, who had been with Adino since his birth, and who cared for him and loved him as if he were her own child. She felt as stricken as did the real mother. Though by nature a monster instead of a woman, Madame Nitolsk,

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as such characters generally do, enfolded her child with a love that was little short of adoration.

The mother threw herself upon the child, beseeching him to awake. But Adino, still more beautiful in this unconsciousness, lay all unheeding of the piteous pleadings of his frantic mother. She rubbed the still limp form and tried to take him in her arms, but when she did so the head fell heavily and the long soft black curls which adorned it hung down. Here the nurse, who was a very strong woman, having overcome the severity of the terrible shock, came into the room and begged Madame Nitolsk to replace the child upon the bed. She was successful in her importunity, and the child was again lying upon his little bed.

To all appearances he was dead—the placid features, the pallor of the skin, the extreme limpness, all said to the mother: “Your Adino is not here—his body is here, but his soul is beyond recall.”

“Suzanne, tell me,” Madame Nitolsk had turned toward the nurse, and her tone was keenly intense, “tell me all you know.”

“He was there, in his bed, when I came in to get him, and he was sleeping so sweetly that I thought I would let him have his sleep out. I crept out of the room and took care not to let in much light. I came back several times, but he slept on. At last I came, intending to wake him. I drew back the night curtains, and there he lay, just like that. I tried to wake him, but I could not.”

Then the nurse began to wring her hands helplessly, and she sobbed: “Adino, Adino, my darling is dead.”

“Dead, not dead,” said Madame Nitolsk, in hollow, half-uttered sound. And taking the small ashen face between her jeweled hands, she looked at it—pain, joy, anxiety, care, expectancy, pride, fear and love were min-

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gled in that one look. All the sentiments and emotions of a mother's devotion were in her face at that moment of awful suspense. If this creature was not a woman, she was a mother, and with one indescribable glance—a glance which stares helplessly into the darkness of unconsciousness, a glance which recoils and yet clings, powerless, while the relentless reality of death mocks at it and dares it to action—she bent over the silent form and kissed it on the forehead and on the cheeks and again on the forehead, as if this expressed adoration might recall the hovering soul.

Then grasping at a ray of hope which at that moment presented itself, she seemed half laughing and half crying. "He can not be dead, for death always leaves the eyes wide open." Her splendid vitality served her well, for the child's appearance, except for the placidity and the pallor, appeared as that of deep sleep. His beautiful eyes were not set in the horrible stare known as the death-stare; but the lids covered them tightly, and the long curving eyelashes swept the delicate cheeks, and their tremulous beauty seemed to cling most tenderly to the soft cheek, as if a premonition told them that ere long they must cease forever to caress it.

"Draw back the day curtains from the windows and let in all the clear daylight."

While the maid obeyed Madame Nitolsk's order, working quickly and carefully, the mother espied a tiny phial beside the child, hidden in a fold of his night-robe. In the twinkling of an eye Madame Nitolsk grasped the entire situation and realized the cause of her child's condition.

"Suzanne, Suzanne—the chemist, the chemist. On your life, Suzanne, quick, the chemist!" The nurse rushed out.

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To three other household servants who had come in Madame Nitolsk gave orders to fetch hot water, medicine chests and warm flannels. When she was alone she picked up the bottle and put it in her bosom. She knew this to be the secret of the trouble—this scene of horror. She ran back in her mind and remembered well when and how this had happened. Her darling had been neglected. She had forgotten to bid him good night in his own room, and he had sought her in her room, and she had been gone. He had seen the phial, for she now recalled having dropped it on the floor. And it had pleased his fancy and he had taken it to bed with him. Of course, he had not let the nurse see it.

It was all horridly plain to her now. And in her anguish she stood like a living statue. Great rushes of color and pallor surged through her frame. Her eyes glittered as she stared at the calm coldness of her child. Her fingers dug into the flesh of her palms. And so violent was this unexpressed agony that huge beads of perspiration stood out upon her forehead. As before noted, this creature was a mother, though a monster. She had a heart, though she had not a soul. And this mute grief was an interior conflict. It was not a remorse; it was not a denunciation; it was a convulsion, a *mêlée* of accusing emotions—a torment. For remorse is the wailing of the soul, and denunciation is the rebuke of the conscience.

She had done it. "Oh, God! am I to kill my child!—my own child!"

The exclamation was mechanical, not felt. Vile potion! Villainous chemist! Accursed hour! And who had done it?—who? What wretched thoughts! They all had echoes—they blasphemed but one thing—one person—they hissed slurs upon her—they heaped crime upon her—they overwhelmed her with vivid actings of the mo-

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tive—they called her by her real name—sorceress—vampire—siren—intriguer—villain—foul schemer—infamous soul—viper in human flesh—scum of the earth—bedeviled female—murderess—homicide—filicide— Unhappy wretch, perdition is yours. Take it, now that you have made it. She shut her eyes and staggered back just a few steps. An internal tremor had seized her. Everything quivered about her. Her head began to swim, and her skull seemed to be crushed into the matter of the brain.

"What is it?" asked a low, insinuating voice behind her.

She started. It was the chemist.

"Oh, Monsieur; Adino must have gotten into my room last evening when I was at your place, and he found the little phial"—she broke off abruptly and looked steadily at the pharmacist. He raised the ends of his eyebrows and opened his almond-shaped eyes, then looked at the limp form, and his face grew very grave.

"He had the little phial in the bed here," continued Madame Nitolsk. "I suppose he sucked it, as a child would, and he has gotten the few drops that had run down from the inside of the bottle."

"Was the phial the one I gave you, or larger?" asked the chemist, in a sepulchral voice.

"No," replied Madame Nitolsk, producing the phial. "It was not the one you gave me; it is a trifle smaller."

"Ah, I see; the amount was small, but he is a child, and a very delicate child at that, and the potion is powerful."

Madame Nitolsk felt Adino's pulse and then laid her ear to his breast. "Are you sure he is not dead?" she asked. "Can not you do something? Do not stand and let him die. Give him something—recall him to life! Save him—save him!"

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There was something sublimely maternal in the pleading, outstretched palms, as she turned her head and looked at her child.

"And if he is dead," she went on, her eyes glared; the tone rattled hard in her throat, and her body moved toward the chemist menacingly; "if he is dead"—the voice had sunk far down and growled in the chest. "Speak out! I will not kill you! I will only kill myself. But if you think there is a spark of life, work, and do not stand and look at him. You may think me mad. No, I am frenzied. He is the only being I have left on earth. And, oh! I love him!"

The hardened soul of the chemist trembled for the first time in his life. Thus far, in all the deadly potions he had concocted, he had never been called actually to face their deadly effect, and he had ever held down by an iron hand the gray matter of the brain, which God had given him as the nervous tissue to arouse images. This woman before him filled him with terror. He felt his knees shake. He shook as in an ague. This frantic woman seemed to be losing her mind. What if she should suddenly become crazed and kill him! He had never before been in a situation so appalling.

"I will try, but"—and the chemist bent very near the agonized mother, while his ugly eyes gleamed and sharp, irregular teeth could be seen, as he continued—"you must give me the jewels you promised me—the ruby necklace."

Madame Nitolsk stared at him as if she were in a trance. Her lips parted, and she instinctively drew back. But he did not pause; he only went on hastily, though decidedly:

"You must get the jewels. There is no time to lose, and I shall not lift a hand to save your child unless you

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get me the necklace at once. There is no time to parley. Act, if you wish me to try."

He paused and drew nearer Madame Nitolsk and lowered his voice to a whisper. "You can call no doctor, or you are lost. It is your fault."

"Have mercy; do not say that it is my fault. I shall go mad."

She buried her face in her hands and her head half fell back. The unhappy woman writhed all over in her torture.

"I am the only one you dare call," went on the uncompassionate chemist. "The jewels first, and then I will try."

"The jewels!" repeated Madame Nitolsk—"the jewels"—as if she had just grasped what the man had said. "Oh, to speak of jewels when my child lies there, dying, or may be dead. To let his life ebb out and not move to save him; to barter in a death chamber! Oh! villain; oh, varlet! to treat me so." Then she turned and left the room. The chemist, after feeling the pulse, opened the child's mouth and then closed it.

"Here," said the chemist, turning toward the nurse, who had just come in; "go to my pharmacy and tell the clerk to give you the black box on the bottom shelf of the safe. He will understand from that. Be quick."

The nurse went from the room in a whirl of excitement and soon returned with the box.

"Fetch me some wine and some water," said the chemist, as Suzanne handed him the black box.

The broken-hearted nurse, casting her sad, swollen eyes toward her baby Adino, gathered her apron to her face and sobbed aloud as she left the room, carrying the order.

"Here," said Madame Nitolsk, as she put a little gold jewel-box into the chemist's hand; "hide this at once;



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here comes the nurse, and never say one word of it."

She had reëntered the room and stood at the foot of the little golden bed in which her child lay.

He took the box, and, as if practicing sleight of hand, put it into his pocket. He said nothing, but began gathering into a small glass a speck of dust from one phial and then a speck from another and another, until he had satisfied himself that he had a combination of active principles—at least an active principle sufficiently potent to overcome the forces of nature, which at that time were operating fearfully fast for the dissolution of the beautiful being lying there in helpless innocence. The chemist opened Adino's mouth, and by means of a small syringe sprayed the inside of the mouth. Then he closed the mouth and held it closed for a few moments, when he prepared another dose and repeated the process.

His face was not readable. It would seem a thing never to be possible that the same spirit—the spirit of God—could be breathed into two persons made of the same material—dust of the earth—and rest within such molds, that formed day by day into shapes so directly opposite—the one a creature with whom one would associate only attributes the highest, while with the chemist one could find nothing that was not at once odious and repellant. At last the chemist paused and stood shaking his head, and adding another inch to the length of his face. And with a premonitory shake of his head he spoke: "He is worse than I thought, but I'll do all that science can do."

He knew that this wicked woman of fabulous wealth loved that small bit of humanity with an undying love. He knew, too, that if he wished he could get more than the pigeon-blood ruby necklace which was now within his keeping.

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"Oh! save my child, Monsieur—save him—save him—and you shall have all the jewels I possess."

"I'll do my best, I'll do my best, Madame Nitolsk."

"Save him! save him! save him! This she stood repeating, until he pointed to a faint purplish tinge passing along by the temple. "There! see, the heart flutters."

Madame Nitolsk clasped her hands and cast her eyes upward, as if about to pray. Then her face grew hard. She remembered that she had never trusted in God. She had never so much as thought there was a God. In fact, she had never sent out into the world a thought unmingled with thoughts of self. In this, the bitterest hour she had ever known, she had nowhere to look for help—to no one, except it were the skeleton now bending over her child and administering draughts, of whose potency she dare not think. She only hoped, in her own way, that all would yet be well. The efforts of the old chemist continued; likewise the stupor of the child.

Madame Nitolsk went out and called up the Trent residence by 'phone. A valet of Lieutenant Trent must have answered the call, for Madame Nitolsk said: "The valet of Lieutenant Trent? Oh! is Lady Trent there? Ah, she is with the artist, Nevere. Is Lieutenant Trent there?" again inquired the voice of Madame Nitolsk.

The listener at the other end of the line must have answered in the negative, but added his whereabouts, for Madame Nitolsk repeated, "He is at the club."

Then there was a silence, in which Madame Nitolsk listened. At last she spoke. "Get whichever you can, Lieutenant or Lady Trent. And, if you please, do it at once. Tell them to come to Madame Nitolsk." Her voice trembled, and she vainly struggled to control it. After listening a moment she added: "They know where Madame Nitolsk lives, on Rue Caumartin—yes—Rue

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Caumartin, near the Opéra. Tell them that the little son of Madame Nitolsk is dying."

Then she hung up the receiver and again came to the side of her child. Fifteen minutes passed by, with not the slightest sign of a change in the condition of the child's appearance. The chemist worked persistently, and Suzanne and three other servants worked as directed by the chemist. Through all this scene Madame Nitolsk moved in a mad walk, back and forth around the room, pleading and beseeching the image of death—this chemist—to save her child, and promising wealth untold.

"Madame Nitolsk! why, what has happened?" asked Lieutenant Trent, who at this moment entered the room.

"Oh! Lieutenant, my dear friend! it is so dreadful—so dreadful! See, my darling boy—my Adinino—such a sad—oh! if he dies I shall surely die, too." All this she vented, broken by most heart-rending sobs and amidst the wildest of gesticulations.

Lieutenant Trent saw that she seemed in danger of a collapse, and he tenderly took hold of her, at the same time saying to the butler, who stood near: "Let us lead the Madame to an easy seat."

They led her, or rather carried her, and finally put her down upon a deep sofa in an adjoining room. Then Lieutenant Trent pulled up a chair and sat facing her. "It is serious, I see. What is it?" he asked of the butler.

Madame Nitolsk heard the question, and, opening her eyes, looked at Trent and answered:

"The servants are ignorant of all. Go, Philippe," she said to the butler. Then turning to the Lieutenant, she began:

"I was out last evening and was detained beyond the hour I had expected to be home. Adino must have gone to my room at the usual hour to say good night. This morning nurse brought me the intelligence of his condi-

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tion, and when I examined his body this tiny bottle was by his side—close up in the folds of his night-robe. It is a phial which had contained a toothache medicine, and, fortunately—oh! so fortunately—so fortunately”—

Here she seemed unable to go on, for she again gave way to wild bursts of passionate grief. Lieutenant Trent tried to soothe her, but in vain.

“Come, quick; Adino is moving!” cried the nurse, as she rushed into the room. Madame Nitolsk leaped from the sofa and fled out of the room, quickly followed by the nurse and Lieutenant Trent.

The chemist was working constantly. He had scarcely straightened his skeleton frame since bending over the child. When Madame Nitolsk saw that Adino was moving feebly, she knelt at the side of his bed, and, taking the little hand between her own, she bowed her head above it. Adino made an effort to draw it away. It was only a spasmodic effort, and not at all voluntary.

Trent stood at the foot of the bed, and silence reigned in the room, except for the faint movement of the air as the chemist passed his hands back and forth over the child.

At last Adino slowly opened his eyes and looked straight in front of him. “Adino, my darling! speak to mama,” cried Madame Nitolsk, for she had seen the long curving lashes sweep upward. But he only stared absently in front of him. His mother continued to call him by every endearing term, no doubt, quite familiar to him; but he seemed not to hear anything. She leaned over him and pleaded: “Adinino, look at mama! here is mama! Adinino, my baby, speak to mama!”

He had closed his eyes and all was again silent. She ceased to weep or to speak and stood in a bent posture above the body of her child, but he moved not. He was still and motionless, as he had been at the first. He

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always seemed more than human, but now in the pallor there was a halo surrounding her baby. Her face grew strangely bright. It was the look of the penitent kneeling before the saint.

Adino again opened his eyes, and they seemed set in a very unnatural stare, while the beautiful mouth was closed. Then the nurse began to cry and wail: "He is dying—he is dying—I know, for I have seen people die—that is the way they look. Oh! oh! my baby—my baby—my baby!"

The nurse was a very devout Catholic, and now began to pray: "Oh! God in heaven, have mercy; save Adinino! save Adinino! Take me, oh God; take me, instead! Save him! Save him!"

She lay sobbing where she had knelt by the side of the bed, with her head pressed down into her hands.

The chemist kept patiently at work all the time, and never lost a moment from watching closely the pallid features of little Adino.

Trent still stood at his place at the foot of the bed, looking intently upon the living death of this beautiful creature, lying there helpless in the toils of seeming dissolution. The child's lips began to move. He was trying to speak. He tried again.

"Look!" said the chemist; "look! Madame Nitolsk, he is trying to speak." All listened in breathless anxiety, lest they should not catch what he might say. Silence reigned for some time. Then a hollow, small voice said faintly:

"Wher—whère—is— — th—t — — — that — — —"  
Then all was quite still for a time, save for the smothered moaning of the old nurse, who wailed in anguish: "Oh! mignon! mignon! mignon! Ah—ah—Adinino!"

Again the voice of the child broke the silence. "Whe—

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re — — is — t — — th — — that — Where — is — that —  
th — at — — angel?"

A long silence followed, for Adino closed his eyes, and Madame Nitolsk fell upon her knees and buried her face in the pillows.

Then Adino's lips again moved, and his eyes opened wearily.

Madame Nitolsk had put her head in front of her child's face, so as he looked he stared into her face.

"No — —" said Adino, wanderingly; "My angel is —  
a — re — e — al — — an — gel — — — my — an — n — n —  
gel — — has — — blue eyes — — and — an — d — d —  
— go — golden — hair."

Madame Nitolsk recoiled as if struck. The nurse had stopped crying and was fervently praying. Every now and then she looked at Adino and then at the chemist, and then at her mistress. These three formed a group at the head of the bed, one on either side and the child upon the bed. And then she would go on praying. Once when she looked up from her prayers she was attracted by the flash of sunlight reflected from the sword of the young English Lieutenant. She knew who he was, for he had come every day for the past three days to the home of Madame, her mistress. She had learned from Yvonne, the special maid of Madame Nitolsk, many small particulars. Then, too, little things dropped from the lips of Madame herself. Suzanne had matched her thus gained knowledge and had weaved it to suit her fancy. He was a young English officer. He had great wealth, for he lived in a mansion with gold-painted iron gates on the Elysées. His name was Sir Reginald Trent. He was heir to some great English title. He was a Lieutenant in the British army. He had met her mistress in India, and when Madame had come to Paris he had come, too. Her mistress was a widow, young, beautiful,

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captivating and wealthy. But what was in the face of the old nurse was not a regard of this nature. When she had been attracted by the reflected flashing she had looked at the sword, and then she had given a start and had stared at the face of the soldier; then she had dropped her head as if ruminating something long before noted; but she did not look down long. She looked up again and scrutinized the young officer, his face, his uniform, his bearing, his all. She looked so steadily and fiercely that her brow knit, her eyes grew small and her mouth opened a very little. She was comparing something mental with something physical. All of a sudden her eyes opened wide, her brow relaxed, her mouth drew straight back. She had found what she had been searching for. She endeavored to reach the officer without attracting the attention of the other watchers. When she had come to a spot close to him she stopped and looked quietly up at him, and not a little fearfully.

"Monseigneur"—that was all could be heard, for she followed the address in a tone so discreetly lowered that no one heard what she said to cause the English officer to start and regard her with a look of amazement, as she proceeded with what must have been a revelation of some sort, and a revelation which embraced in itself something relating to Adino, if it did not embrace Adino himself.

The officer looked from her face, upon which she had held his gaze riveted, to the deathlike form of little Adino. The nurse pursed her brow, endeavoring to impress this great man with the urgency of a compliance with the conditions, whose acceptance or refusal meant life or death. All this the student of human life in action could very easily have seen.

"Go find some one with golden hair and blue eyes," said the chemist, straightening his ghoulisn figure; "it

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makes no difference who, just so it answers the description."

Madame Nitolsk did not hear him. She seemed crushed and lay with her head buried in the cushions around her son. She was bereft of any strength she might have had. Cunning needs little strength, and strength requires no cunning—a wise provision of nature.

Lieutenant Trent was still listening to the nurse, who was certainly capable of interesting the brave officer with her bit of information. That form of ceremony such as should have been observed between the servant and the officer was, for the time, swept away. The chemist looked upon the mother; she was helpless in her wild grief. He looked upon the servants, but they all seemed stricken with fear, for servants are always superstitious in the presence of death. Then he looked with contumely at the strong officer, and wondered why he should be so forgetful as to chat with a serving maid at a moment when the energies of all should be directed toward assisting him.

"Go," he cried, in tones that carried authority; "go at once; get some one. He is dying—go quick, or it will be too late."



## CHAPTER XIII.

Julia was standing in the middle of her room, reading a letter which she had just opened. She was still in street attire, not having removed even her hat, coat or gloves. She had just returned from luncheon, which she had taken across the way, a bit up the street; indeed, at the farthest end of the square from her place. But it was a very short little square.

As she read, a bright smile played over her face, and every now and then a word like "Good," "Bravo," escaped her lips.

After finishing her letter she removed her hat and coat and took her accustomed seat in the arm-chair, in which she had rested daily for fully fifteen minutes after coming from luncheon. It was a rule of health religiously observed by her, in order that she would be sure of proper digestion having taken place. Once, at the beginning of her studies with Signor Novara, she had been bothered into a crimsoning by the startling question: "What did you eat for luncheon?" And as she had not answered, the master had explained why he had put that question. He always asked after the health of his pupils, for he said: "If you keep well, you are living properly, and if you do not keep well, then you are living improperly; and if you are living wrong, then you can not sing."

So in compliance with the mild request of Signor Novara, Julia had always spent fifteen minutes after each meal in pleasant thoughts, and seated, if possible.

At this time she dwelt upon the pleasant features of

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the letter, for naturally it filled her every thought. She smiled at recollection of it.

Madame Cinati had scored a signal success and had wired of her great triumphs on Thursday night, when she had sung *Ophelia*. She had been called to the royal box after the finish of the Mad Scene. The next day she had received a necklace bearing the royal initial and a command to sing before the King and Queen at the palace.

The telegram had also said that she had sent the press comments. This was the first time that Madame Cinati had complied with Julia's request to send her the papers of the city in which Madame sang.

The future of Julia Pembroke, the American singer, passed in kaleidoscopic views before her, showing herself in the long-delayed début.

Here a faint knock at the door broke off her pleasant reverie.

Julia knew it must be some one doing service of some kind, for she was well aware of the custom of the house, which forbade servants using the bell. She arose and opened the door.

"Pardon, Mademoiselle, here is a letter which fell behind the table this morning. I am very sorry, Mademoiselle, that I am so tardy in delivering it."

"There is no harm done," said Julia; "it is not very late. Thank you."

She closed the door and scrutinized the superscription. She endeavored to read the postmark: "L-o-n— It must be London." Though as to this she would remain in ignorance until she opened it and read inside. This she lost no time in doing, and eagerly broke the seal.

It was London. But who could it be from? She seldom received letters from any one, and this letter—penmanship and all—was most assuredly a mystery.

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Though she had made many friends—rather, formal acquaintances—there was not one whom she deemed sufficiently intimate to send her so long a communication. She turned at once to the back and read the bold black signature.

Oh! joy untold! It was signed the impresario of Covent Garden, London. Her hands trembled beyond control. This was an unexpected delight. For a time it seemed that her head swam. She felt faint and sought the security of her armchair near the window.

He had written that on a certain date, two years before, he had heard her sing at a "Benefit of Douai," and that he had seen then she had an extraordinary voice; that a few days since, on speaking with the Princesse de Grancourt regarding a benefit concert which he was about to give, she had suggested to him the name of Mademoiselle Pembroke, of Paris, an artist-pupil of Signor Enrico Novara.

That he relied much upon the excellent judgment of the Princesse de Grancourt, since she had shown marked ability on several occasions in aiding at the selection of participants when he was arranging for concerts. That Madame la Princesse had said there was much improvement in Mademoiselle Pembroke's voice during her studies of the past two years.

The Princess had heard Miss Pembroke at an audition given by Signor Novara, and that he himself recalled the beauty of her voice. He now made her this offer, and hoped that he might be able to present her to the London world as the first lyric prima donna of Covent Garden. Since in April one of the singers would leave London and go to Berlin, he wished to have the place vacated by this soprano filled by Mademoiselle Pembroke. The operas in which she would have to appear were "Faust," "La Bohème," "Rigoletto" and "Lucia." That

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she was privileged to select from the foregoing number the opera in which she would prefer to make her début. That the first two weeks of the season, commencing April 30, would be devoted to the Wagnerian cycle, thus giving her over three months in which to prepare herself, by coaching with the master, in the operas required of her. That her salary would be £160 a month.

When Julia had finished reading the letter she went to the beginning and started to read it anew. She read a thought, then looked out of the window, saying to herself that she had sung at that "Benefit of Douai" to please a friend of Madame Cinati's. She thought of the little verse she had learned when a very young child—far too young to know its meaning—"Cast thy bread upon the waters, and thou shalt gather it after many days."

Here was an offer to sing at Covent Garden, and for no mean salary, at that, and all because this impresario had heard her sing at that benefit. She remembered, too, the great reluctance upon the part of the master to let her sing at that place. She laughed now as she recalled the scene when she had asked permission to sing.

Signor Novara had said: "Singing at benefits is all very well, after one is through with the years of preparatory study and after acceptance by the music-loving critics. But if you go out to sing everywhere before I have you finished, you will do your voice great harm. I would advise you not to sing a song for any one until your study period is over."

She looked over the top of her letter, loth to leave contemplations so sweet. What could be more delectful, more intoxicating, than a promised début at one of the most renowned opera houses in the world, in the largest city and in a realm? And all this to a youthful débutante, who had studied six long years. She could easily prepare

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all the operas named in the letter by the date set for her début.

Yes, she would sing *Lucia* as her first rôle, if she accepted; she would speak of it to Signor Novara when she should go to the lesson to-day.

Then she wondered if the King and Queen would be in the royal box when she should sing there, and if their Majesties would like her singing. She lived in retrospect again. A small scene came before her, a visionary picture of herself, which she had imagined in childhood—far back on a vast stage stood a small creature in pink. Many jewels flashed from her head and body and she was singing. People sat in the aisles and stood in the corridors. There was a twinkling of lights, a reflection of gems—a mere movement of perfumed air. Great throngs waited outside, in a drizzling, steady rain. Hansoms and cabs were hurrying in all directions. It was the London of a child's dream—the début of herself—the longing of a born singer.

She folded the letter with much deliberation, and then went toward the mantel, upon which she placed it. Then she sat down at the table, where lay the open score of "*Lucia*," in which the master had continued her studies.

She placed her elbows upon the table, one on either side of the music, and, leaning forward, she buried her forehead in the curve formed by her fingers, and began the repetition of the words of the score. In this way, shading her eyes and resting her head, the brain was eased. She worked steadily for some minutes. Then, as if seized by some force supernatural, she suddenly lifted her head, and, resting her chin upon the back of her locked fingers, stared hard in front of her. Her eyes were almost closed, and certainly she was not busy committing the score of "*Lucia*."

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No, she was far away—doing what? It were difficult, indeed, to tell just what was at that moment transpiring within the scope of her mental vision. She herself could not, if she would, have defined or described the strange feeling. She only knew that this was a very strange experience for her. She had never been troubled by anything of a nature to prevent the concentration of her mind upon a given subject. And now, here she was giving way to an idle thought about a beautiful child that she had seen the afternoon before.

She turned impatiently to her work, chiding herself for such weakness. But again the image of the beautiful child was before her. Only this time a yearning gentleness was in the large, black, pleading eyes, which restrained her brain and held her in their grasp, until she felt her entire being shaken by a nervous chill.

"Pshaw!" she exclaimed; "this is surely the strangest experience of my life. What can be the matter with me? I wonder if I am giddy over this great offer from London. I shall certainly grieve the master this afternoon, for I have committed but two pages.

"Ah! there are those pleading eyes again! Why does my mind revert to them constantly? Oh! what pathos! And I have seen this picture of that child since noon to-day! It came to me at luncheon, and I have not been able to chase it away! Though he was surprisingly beautiful in his sweet, childish simplicity—this does not excuse my very foolish, uncontrollable weakness to waste my time in thoughts of him. I will not waste another moment."

Ding! ding! ding! the doorbell rang vigorously, and rang three times.

As no one but Madame Cinati or Lady Trent ever gave her bell three pulls, when Julia opened the door she was not surprised to find Lady Trent.

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"Ah! good afternoon, Lady Trent. I am very glad indeed to see you." This she said while taking Lady Trent by the arm and leading her to a sofa in the sitting room. Lady Trent had not waited to be invited, but had entered as soon as Julia had opened the door.

"Thank you, my sweet child," said Lady Trent; "you are very kind, indeed. Do not remove my furs, dear," she went on, for Julia had begun to unfasten the long, silver-fox stole. Then glancing toward the table, on which she saw Julia's open book, she continued, though in a question: "Were you studying?"

"No, I was only looking at the lesson," answered Julia, for she felt that she had not been studying.

"Now, I am going to ask you to do me a favor, Julia."

"Please demand, my dear Lady Trent, and if it is possible, I shall comply with your request."

"The little son of Madame Nitolsk is very ill, and he is constantly calling for some one whom he calls 'an angel, with blue eyes and golden hair.' Will you go and see him?"

"Assuredly, at once; the disease is not contagious, I hope."

"Oh, no;" replied Lady Trent. "He took some kind of toothache powders or drops—some accident—at least, it was by mistake. That is all I know."

"Have you been there?" asked Julia.

"No, Reginald had been called there by 'phone, and had left there and was coming up Champs Elysées when I met him. He was going to find me at Monsieur Nevere's, but I had been at the English Embassy instead, and was on my way home. He told me of the child's illness and asked me to fetch you."

"How strange! I did not know that Madame Nitolsk had a child!" exclaimed Julia, rather listlessly, for she had finished her preparation to accompany Lady Trent

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and was thinking if she had not better 'phone the maestro. Then she had an after-thought, that since the lesson was not until a late hour, she might yet be able to go to Signor Novara's place. If not, she would send some one in time so as not to cause the master to wait her coming.

"Here are your gloves, child," said Lady Trent, for she noticed Julia's abstraction.

The gloves were lying where Julia had dropped them in her haste to read the letter from London.

"Ah! thank you, Lady Trent."

"Fortunately, I came in the automobile," observed Lady Trent, as they went out together. "We can speed there in a very short time."

A few minutes later Lady Trent and Julia had descended at the home of Madame Nitolsk, and the butler opened to their ring.

He was a very important personage—a French butler, in livery of purple velvet, with a yellow satin sash passing over the left shoulder and meeting at the waist line, under, but a little in front, of the left arm. From the bottom of the sash, which reached to the knee, hung deep and very heavy gold fringe. There was a crest in gold upon the front of the sash and a little to the left.

Lady Trent saw the crest and recognized it as the heraldic bearings of a noble Roman family. When they were in the vestibule, the butler was about to speak, but Lady Trent, seeing her son descending the grand marble staircase, which could be seen through the open crystal doors between the vestibule and the large reception hall, went toward him, followed by Julia.

"This way, mother," said Trent. "Ah! so glad you came," he said to Julia, approaching and taking her by the hand, and, bending over it, touched it to his lips. "I thank you very, very much for your kindness."



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"I am sure I am glad to come if I can in any way serve the little child."

"This way," and, taking Julia's arm and tenderly assisting his mother on his right, they ascended the broad marble staircase.

On entering Adino's room Julia recognized the man, who seemed to be acting in the capacity of doctor, as the chemist of whom she had at various times made purchases of sundry, insignificant articles. She thought nothing of his being there instead of a visiting physician, for chemists in Paris are well educated, and know the use and effect of all drugs.

Several servants were about the bed, so Julia could not see the little one as they entered the bedchamber. Some other very serious-looking servants stood here and there about the room, with towels, cups, spoons and other articles, for which, no doubt, the chemist had called.

A maid knelt in the corner, beyond the bed. Her swollen eyes and set, haggard face and pale lips told of the dejected condition of her spirits. Her fingers told the beads, in which, without doubt, she had unbounded confidence, that through the good spirit she invoked little Adino would live. And who can say that her prayers were not the measure of devotion yet required to bring into healthy action the little organism into which the old chemist was pouring his potions, in which he had confidence like unto that of the believer in spiritual force. If the spiritual and physical—faith and work—are required to save a soul and fit it for heaven, why is it not possible that the physician's efficacy would be very materially aided by the prayers of the righteous?

Lady Trent and Julia went toward Madame Nitolsk to offer words of sympathy and condolence. Lady Trent took a chair by the side of the one in which Madame Nitolsk was seated, and, taking her hands, chafed first

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one and then the other in a genuinely sympathetic manner. Julia, however, not experienced in scenes such as this before her—in fact, never only at the death of her father having found herself in a scene of extreme sadness—had only the customary formula to offer, and then she withdrew from the little circle and went toward the child's bed. As Julia reached the foot of the bed and saw the child, she started back. She laid hold on the gold knob of the bed for support. After a time she recovered herself and stood looking at the child, her face and entire being bespeaking interest and admiration.

Julia knew this child to be the same little one whom she had seen in the *Grus* music store—the same little child whose beautiful speaking eyes had chased away all thought of her study during the past hour.

How she longed for a sight of them now! In her mind, even at this moment, the same pathetic, troubled eyes pleaded with her as before. But she could not see his eyes now. They were tightly closed.

She riveted her gaze, determined that if he opened his eyes he should see her, and, too, that if he opened them for only a short time she might be sure whether their expression was the same as that of the eyes that had haunted her in her room.

All the radiant beauty of her being shone in her face and in every fibre of her body, drawn to its utmost tension at this moment, as she bent slightly forward over the foot of the bed in an eager expectancy for the moment to arrive when he should lift those lids, when there should be an upward, graceful movement of those silken lashes, that now lay quite still, without betraying so much as the slightest twitching of a muscle.

She was benignly beautiful and fitted by nature and training to be worshiped as a goddess of the Good—of the True—of the Beautiful.

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The nurse, who was telling her beads, paused in her petition and told herself that she had been fortunate indeed to have recalled that the young English officer, standing at the foot of the bed a short time before, was the same officer who, near the *Grus* music store, had parted company from this young woman with yellow hair and large, kind, blue eyes. Indeed, she told herself it must have been by the aid of her prayers that she had thought of this young woman. The pious old nurse, when Adino had called for "that angel," had thought he must be dying, and was having a glimpse of the angels about whom she had taught him. Indeed, so carefully had she taught him as to the attendance of angels, as she looked upon their mission, that he felt himself at all times under the guardianship of two angels by day, and under the protection of an extra force of four others, who guarded the four corners of his bed all through the silent watches of the night. In strange contrast, truly, was this imaginary angelic host attendant upon the child, to the evil-inspiring host of appalling blackness, which surrounded the daily and nightly pathway of the mother of little Adino.

Now the nurse understood—she thought she did—what Adino had meant on last evening when he had sat looking into the flames, as they danced and leaped up the fireplace of the great chimney while she arranged for their evening meal. He and nurse had eaten together since he had been able to take his seat at the table, for mama was very particular that everything pertaining to table service should be dainty, elegant, sumptuous, stiffly dignified. When Adino was grown he might be seated at the table, but not before.

As Adino had watched the fantastic figures formed by the leaping flames, now high, now low, now sinuous, now laughing, catching each other in loving embrace, his

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large, earnest eyes had turned toward the nurse, and he had asked: "Suzanne, when I die will all these black curls fall out, and shall I have new hair—golden hair?"

The nurse had laughed and answered: "Ah! no, dear Adino; there are more angels with dark hair—real black hair—than there are with yellow hair."

Evidently he had not been satisfied with this answer, for he had continued: "In all my picture books every angel has golden hair and blue eyes. I never saw an angel with black hair—black hair like mine. They all have hair and eyes like that lady I saw at the music store, when I got that violin string."

This he had said while his gazelle eyes had lingered in a gentle, yet very inquiring, survey of nurse's face, until she had answered: "Ah! Adinino, there are beautiful angels with hair and eyes just exactly like yours."

Presently the eyes of Adino opened, slowly at first, then suddenly to a wide-open stare, as if he realized that the vision of his delirium stood before him. Julia had changed her attitude of strained expectancy to one of tenderest compassion, and stood smiling upon him, just as she had done when he had entered the music store. The eyes of Adino rested upon Julia and he made several attempts to speak. At last he succeeded, and called out in a very weak voice: "Mama."

Madame Nitolsk was at his side in a moment, crying: "Oh! my baby! my darling! what is it? Here is mama! Speak to me! What is it, Adino?"

"Mama — there — is — th—at — angel."

His beautiful eyes were fixedly staring at Julia, the light in their velvety depths dimmed and altogether very unnatural. Soon they were closed again and he lay quite like a creature into which the breath of life had not yet come, or out of which the spirit had just fled. He had

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lapsed into the same comatose condition, and the chemist began to look more serious than he had yet done.

"Is he not better?" asked Lady Trent.

"No, I think he is dying," replied the chemist.

Madame Nitolsk sobbed convulsively, and Lady Trent led her away from the bedside. All the servants present joined in a general weeping. The nurse, who had heard the chemist say Adino was dying, slipped out, but soon returned with a very devout-looking priest, whom she guided up to the bed and begged him "to prepare Adino for death."

The priest passed along after the nurse, amidst the genuflexions of the servants upon every side.

Again Adino half opened his eyes and called: "Mama!"

Madame Nitolsk hastily came to the bedside and bent over him, saying: "Here is mama."

"Mama, don't angels sing?" asked Adino, while his eyes rested calmly upon Julia, who still stood at the foot of the bed.

"Julia," said Lady Trent, "I believe it would please him to hear you sing."

Though Lady Trent had spoken in low, quiet tones, they were yet audible enough for Madame Nitolsk to hear the remark made to Julia.

"Oh! Miss Pembroke, I beg of you, do sing something—anything you may select," entreated Madame Nitolsk.

Julia, willing to do so, wisely asked the chemist: "Are you quite sure, Monsieur, that it would have no undesirable effect upon little Adino?"

"Ah! no, Mademoiselle; the contrary would be the effect, I assure you."

Julia, not at all acquainted with the religion of Madame Nitolsk, scarcely knew what song to sing. But see-

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ing a priest, supposed Madame Nitolsk of the Catholic faith. And as for Adino, she would try to please and satisfy his taste by means of her voice alone.

Julia, though a Protestant, was a child of God, and believed that all who trusted God were children and heirs to the future He had planned for the immortal part of their natures. She had learned the "Ave Maria" to please her teacher, who had wished to hear it sung by her voice and for art's sake alone. She now recalled what Maestro Novara had said when she had finished singing—"The angels in heaven knelt while you sang."

"Yes," thought Julia; "I will sing this."

So she took a long breath and began—"Ave Maria." The long-held notes sighed themselves out upon the silence of the room. And the echo of the first met the breath of the second. But there was no discord; there was only a soft vibration, as of distant chimes heard in the memory as they mingled and hovered one moment, until the breath had become an echo, and they died away and fell together into the still ether around.

The divine voice went on, and there was so much sound that it perforated the sunlight, and all the air quivered. The golden purity of the notes caught the color of the sunlit air and reflected the lights of human life into the clear water of the sound.

And the notes divided, for the high ones, entering the sunlight, seemed to take life and were created a soul, and went outward and upward and vanished into the great above, while the low notes lingered below, to whisper consolation, until the high notes should return from heaven with the granted appeal.

The light coming in through the window at this hour of the afternoon was strong enough to make the face of Julia very distinct to Adino. He kept his eyes steadily, though not at all fixedly, resting upon her face. A smile

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played around the delicately molded mouth, and a peaceful expression, cast as it were by the reflex of an unseen halo, encircled the small, pale face. The eyes, though natural and showing not the slightest influence of the smiling mouth, shown with a beauty of expression by which Julia knew that the little soul quivered with the real import of the touching appeal of Gounod's "Ave Maria."

Madame Nitolsk forgot to weep in listening to the tones which carried the spirit of adoration to the highest of that emotion as known to mankind.

And as the prayer passed on, through vocalization by Julia, when the sinner beseeches the Holy Mother to petition at the throne of Mercy for the redemption of his soul, Madame Nitolsk, under the spell of the magnetic power of the prayer or its musical expression, or both, bowed her head upon the bed of her child and shook convulsively.

Lady Trent stood beside the kneeling mother, and for the first time in her life a singing voice made the tears follow in quick succession down her cheeks.

Lieutenant Trent, standing at the foot of the bed, a little to the left of Julia, bowed his head and crossed his hands upon the hilt of his sword. Such singing he had often read of, but never before had he heard.

The chemist was a shrewd, keen, heartless man, and, though he wondered at the marvelous voice, he did not forget the faint throb under the press of his tapering fingers. Upon his ghoulis face was registered a strange appeal, for he was anxious to save Adino, and he knew that the pulse had grown more regular than it had been before. The priest, who had been standing beside the chemist when the song began, listened, and as the song moved on in heart-rending pleadings for mercy, the priest and the servants, as one person, fell

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upon their knees, and, clasping their hands devotionally upon their breasts, with faces upturned to the Divinity before Whose shrine they knelt, they sent up the sincere desire of their hearts, as expressed in the words, and as expressed by the divine music of Gounod, and as expressed in the soulful tones of the human voice, which carried the spirit held in the body out—far out—of its earthly domain, where what is God awaits the coming of what is God in each mortal upon earth. In other words, where the immortal part of ourselves will clasp hands with the immortal part of loved ones gone before, and where God will again apportion to each the mission of each there, in accordance with the respective merits carried from earth—Heaven.

And when the last sighed "Ave" floated out and ceased to echo, a deathlike stillness pervaded the room, save for the convulsive movements of Madame Nitolsk. What was going on within this woman? No one knew—yes, some one did—for God knew.

Julia did not move from her position, but stood smiling sweetly at Adino, who smiled back at her. It was the smile in which the eyes joined and echoed back the call to life and health. Then there was a stir—a restless movement of Adino, and the entire small body heaved violently.

It was the chemist who broke the intense, the pall-like spell. "He will not die; the crisis is passed. He will live."

Half an hour later Madame Nitolsk, Lady Trent and Lieutenant Trent stood at the head of the steps, bidding Julia good-bye. At this juncture of affairs the brave heart of Lieutenant Trent was not his own. It had gone out to the fair American singer, who some minutes be-



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fore had given them all a glimpse of heaven through the medium of the divine in Gounod.

As there had been nothing more which Julia might have been able to do for Adino, and as the chemist had said that he must be very quiet, she had decided to leave now, for it was nearing the hour when she should be with the maestro.

Lady Trent had said: "Julia, my landau is at the door. Be sure you take it, for the air is somewhat chill, especially for you. Guard that jewel in your throat, and do not take cold."

Julia had thanked her warmly, and, with Lieutenant Trent, who had insisted upon seeing her off, had gone down the marble staircase, and the crystal doors of the vestibule had closed behind them. But when they had stepped outside the street doors they found no automobile there.

Julia was greatly surprised, and so was the young Lieutenant. Now this surprise on the part of the young English officer was affected.

Reginald Trent had known all the time that the automobile was not at the door, for when his mother and Julia had entered, he had sent it away, with orders to return when 'phoned for. He had hoped by this little delay, and trusting to the desertedness of the downstairs during such a time as had just passed, to be able at least to say a few words of great import to himself; for Lieutenant Trent was not an eloquent man, and, more, too, he had never tried to weave such sentences.

"Go 'phone for my automobile," said Trent to the butler, giving him the number.

"Yes, my lord, I shall do so; but sometimes it requires patience, for it is often difficult to get a message."

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Then he looked at Julia, who had crossed the vestibule and had entered the reception hall. The butler, like most persons, worshiped a gifted singer, and felt that this young American was a personage—one far removed from the ordinary walks of life. And though he hurried up the marble steps on his way to the 'phone, he turned and cast a lingering look upon the young woman who had filled the house with music, and by the sweetest voice he had ever heard. He looked upon Julia as one would expect a 'believer of household gods to look upon his penates.

Julia went into the reception hall, for there were no seats in the vestibule, and there were chairs in the reception hall, and, besides, Julia had been standing for so long that she was really tired.

They sat down, Julia in a large easy-chair and Trent in a very severely straight one, which was fashioned without a back, excepting for a bit of a gold frame which stood some ten inches above the cushioned seat. A soldier like Trent finds it most agreeable to receive as little support as possible when in the full dress of his rank. A soldier brave is a soldier strong at all times, whether sitting, standing, walking or fighting, and needs no support from any person, place, time or thing.

Trent looked at Julia, and for a time there was a silence.

Julia was truly fatigued, but beyond a slight relaxation of the severe tension to which her nerves had been strained, she was in her usual health and spirits.

Trent thought her the most captivating woman he had ever known, and he knew he loved her. And he felt impelled to do just what any young man under such circumstances would do—tell her so. He would be brave, he would. But brave as he was upon the field of battle, and fearless as he was of all dangers and ills

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which befell him in the ordinary or in the extraordinary walks of life, he now felt himself almost powerless to tell this gentlewoman of his love for her, and to offer her his name, his home, his life—himself, and to beg of her in return the right to see her seated in his home, the queen of his home, his heart, his fortunes, through life and eternity. Oh! how he loved her!

Why was it so difficult to speak when the heart was so full—full to overflowing—full with the subject matter—and he knew perfectly all that he wished to say? But it was not only difficult to say—it verged on the impossible to say.

Julia, who since seating herself had been silent, too, now turned her eyes upon Trent and said: "I noticed a strange crest upon the sash of the butler. Do you know what it is?"

"No, I do not."

Then, moving his chair close enough to Julia to take both of her hands in his, he said: "Miss Pembroke, this may be a surprise to you, but I am a blunt soldier, used to war's alarms, and hardly capable of gentle wooing. But I love you with all the strength of my nature. I have never before loved any woman as I now love you, and I feel I can not think of life without you. I love you, I love you, believe me, I love you." And bending over the small white hands he fondly held in his, he pressed them to his lips and lingered for a moment, as if reverently accentuating a fervent appeal.

"True," he continued, "I have only a soldier's heart and hearth to offer, but all that I have is yours; and I shall love you than which no man ever loved woman better."

Julia offered no resistance to his manner of action, nor opposition to his sentiments as expressed in this declaration of his ardent love.

## CHAPTER XIV.

On Christmas eve Alverstone went out from the Grand Hôtel upon the Boulevard des Capucines. Seeing him pause a moment, one of the many cabmen waiting near by came up and asked him to take a cab, but he was absorbed in his own way; he was only thinking which of the two directions he should follow. He finally started down the thoroughfare, pursuing his way slowly and in a very hesitating manner until he came to the Opéra. It was ten-thirty. "Tannhauser" was cultivating the very large number of those who gathered to hear it sung.

Alverstone stood lost in a sort of reverie, while a feeling of something akin to sadness came over the spirit of his dream. He looked up at the magnificent gray structure standing so firmly, yet stately and grandly; proudly triumphant in the glory she had wrought for the art of song. That magnificent creature that reigns with and yet above the surrounding blocklike buildings, that huddle themselves together, and look like dumb, wondrous slaves at their superb, gray chiseled queen, who has for her crown a golden lyre and for a throne the juncture of an old but modern city's great ways.

After standing for some time at the corner of Boulevard des Capucines, gazing up at the Opéra, contemplating future scenes within its walls—scenes in which Julia would be the principal, unless—unless—dare he think it? Yes, he dare, for he had determined to try to win her for his fireside queen. She should not be an opera singer, that she should not. He thought he knew the gentlewoman well enough to know that if Miss Pem-

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broke had meant to oppose his suit, her manner on the evening at the Trents' would have been less pleasant; and the sympathy shown him afterwards, especially as they went down the broad staircase, on out to where he had carefully assisted her into Madame Cinati's carriage, was certainly possessed of a degree of warmth quite soothing to a lover, who had sought and had not found the jewel of his desires. He should cherish as long as he lived the picture of her sweet face on that memorable first night at the Opéra. In there he had seen her smile upon him, he had sat beside her and had felt that she loved him; at least that she was glad that he was near, and more than glad that he had been pleased to give her especial attention. In the time of their acquaintance, which was short, but of higher import than a longer one less happy, he was sure that not once had she shown the least impatience with the attentions of which she had been the object, and with which attentions he knew that he had been importunate, almost to a degree of indelicacy. How could he help it, though? She was possessed of a womanhood he had held as his ideal, and which, until one week ago yesterday afternoon, he had not supposed existed in mortal flesh; for had he not known intimately and well many young ladies, and had not all proven lacking in the sincerity of womanly traits of character which he considered indispensable?

He had told himself that this lack of womanly characteristic in so many young women was the sole reason for so many young men failing to find their ideal woman.

What if she should always refuse him! He would leave Paris—travel the world over. Then he might forget these days, but if he did all this, Julia Pembroke would haunt his mind still; for, strange to say, during the past ten days a network had formed about his heart, and it was made of strong cords, for they had been

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woven at the loom of True Love. And this network was so ingeniously stretched that its art-pattern always spelled "Julia." He was bound body and soul—for this was his first, his only love, and he was worshipful in this love. His body might leave Paris, but his soul would not.

What was the matter? The world seemed so different. Had he become a cynic? What made him so sad—so morbid? He knew why, but he did not want to admit that he was so weak. He evaded the answer, but everything he saw or looked at made him understand why—exactly why. He told himself he was growing melancholy, but he should not be so. Did not Julia smile at him? Then Julia was not engaged; if she were, she would not have smiled.

A man, lean and fleet-footed as a deer, ran toward him. He was crying, "Le Figaro," "La Patrie."

Alverstone hailed him—gave him one franc for a paper. The man reached in his pocket for change, but Alverstone objected with, "No, no; keep it."

The man grinned, pocketed the silver coin, and, lifting his cap, thanked his benefactor.

There is chivalry sometimes even in a gamin.

Alverstone passed the Olympia. Some few stragglers, evidently street ticket vendors, loitered before the light-swept entrance, but he did not even look in, for he never went into music halls.

A little farther on a column attracted his attention. "Manon" at the Opéra Comique—he went over and read it, but he had been mistaken. "Manon" was to be given the Monday following; to-night "Carmen"—the very name was repulsive to him—it recalled Madame Nitolsk. No, he would not go—"Tannhauser" at the Opéra and "Le Réveil" at the Théâtre Français.

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Abominable! How many times these plays loom up on the placards!

There were two small gamins, curled up, sleeping, before they would have to begin their midnight walk; for all such know that to be found standing after the hour of midnight means arrest by the police, a fact that often proves disagreeable to the stranger in Paris, for this newcomer, even though an honest, law-abiding person, is not exempt from arrest if found standing after twelve of the night.

The street was icy, and horses every now and then slipped and fell; some, no doubt, glad to take advantage of the moment's rest while the distracted driver disentangled the miserable beast.

Though great boulevards and avenues never sleep, they take naps every now and then, and the Boulevard des Capucines, when Alverstone finished looking at the column of amusements, had just rubbed its eyes and was awaking from one of those naps. All of a sudden, as if a world had been created by magic, the great boulevard began to stir. Some people were going to and from the cafés, others of the fashionable world were going to the Opéra. Of course, they rode in their cabs, and had obviously been at Madame de Somebody's reception or Christmas ball, and only went to the Opéra because they knew that from the position they occupied in their boxes they could be seen and admired; for they were skillfully made up, both men and women, and the fair ones had very magnificent costumes.

There were many creatures who wore the small cap with the peak. They wedged their way through the crowd when there was plenty of room on either side, or they lingered in the shadow of some small paper stand which was closed. These were the pickpockets and the

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Apaches of the city of Paris, that are never to be seen when a policeman is in sight.

And, too, there were many gaily-dressed women, accompanied by handsome men, and these promenaded the wide sidewalk of the boulevard. And some of the fair creatures, who were obviously bored with their companions, eyed Alverstone coquettishly, for he was a very distinguished and handsome young man. There were other people, evidently going early to Mass—pious people, who believed that only by such rigorous devotion they might escape the everlasting flames.

Though both sides of the street were well filled with passers-by, the north side was more crowded, for there was a profusion of light on that side, and the other side was dull and uninteresting in comparison, and people are human millers, and bright light attracts them if they are healthy or gay.

But this great boulevard looked like many other great avenues and boulevards look at certain parts of hours, and, like the rest of its kind, the Boulevard des Capucines at some forty-five minutes past ten o'clock the night before Christmas, was a great street, where fashion promenaded and rags sauntered.

Alverstone walked on—the crowd was very thick—every one seemed to notice him—life had ceased to please him—solitude was what he craved—he did not want to distract his mind—he wanted to hear his thoughts—he wanted to answer the odd queries his brain might put to him.

He was going to the Madeleine, but it was not yet time; he had a full hour and a half yet. He would go to *Prunier*, the great Parisian restaurant, where the finest oysters in the world are served. This restaurant was on Rue Duphot; he would go there directly by quitting the boulevard. So he crossed the street and turned down



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one of those small streets which go off great boulevards.

Nothing was stirring. The small shops were closed and barred for the night. The street was as silent as a catacomb. How different some streets can be, with no apparent wall or separation—a poor quarter adjoins a rich quarter—a silent a noisy one. Paris is without visible walls through the city, though there are walls formed by neighborhood conditions. It is modern, but clings to some things medieval.

Alverstone walked quickly. He was glad to be alone. Near a corner where a rather wide street intersects a small one he heard voices speaking hurriedly. He was not a sensitive or guilty man, so he walked on and did not alter his pace as he approached the spot where the speakers were half concealed. When he had almost come upon them he heard a man's voice say, "As strong as possible," and he saw the outline of two figures as they left their place of concealment and parted. One was a lean, bending figure, which carried carefully a long pasteboard box under the arm, and scudded away like a spider with a newly caught fly—proudly and stealthily. The companion glided away like a serpent. Whether man or woman, it was hard to determine from the long cloak—a half mantilla—which wrapped the entire form; yet when judged from height, might be that of a man; yet, judged from the rapid glide, might be that of a woman.

The shaggy ponderous creature hailed a cab and was out of sight around a corner, while the very tall, bending one went in an opposite direction.

Very odd, very odd, thought Alverstone, but he did not hasten his pace, though as he crossed the wide intersecting street he heard a noise and a sharp click. No doubt the tall, bending figure had gone in somewhere down the rather wide street, and the noise was the shut-

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ting of a door, and the click the turning of a key in its lock.

Paris is a great city, and while certain people may be noticeably interested in certain others, the world at large does not spy.

Paris has many peoples, and who can say who they are—where they come from or what they are doing? Each one is living his own life—the life of a great city.

A *badaud* may seem overinterested in two pretty feet, or a twisted cravat. A gamin or a grown up one may haunt a certain street because some one there has a sympathetic heart. A demonstrative youth may play or sing out his heart beneath a dark window that is never opened at day, never lit by night.

There are trees on which blossoms bloom, then blow away—such flowers are these—the *badaud*—the gamin and the grown-up one, and the sighing youth; but there are also leaves on all trees, and these leaves are the other people—its majority—the people who live on Paris, by Paris and for Paris.

The door which Alverstone had heard close was that of a pharmacy. The key that had turned was the big night key; the tall, bending figure, that of a chemist.

Alverstone had surmised aright when he conjectured that the tall, bending figure with the long pasteboard box had closed a door and turned a key in its lock.

As the apothecary shut the door and turned around the low burning lights of the shop fell upon his face. Even though the high forehead was powerfully intellectual, there was something disagreeable in its narrowness. It was the forehead of a willful man; a man that stoops to anything; that blindfolds innocence, that forces reluctance, that cajoles frivolity, that makes partner of

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evil. He was a dangerous man! The prominent temples and the slanting forehead told that. He was a cunning, crafty man; the contraction of the eyes, the placid brow and the set of the mouth marked that. It was a hideous visage—the narrow half square jaw, the painful stretch of the sallow skin, from the high cheek bones to the chin; the small, distorted, almond-shaped eyes, which glittered menacingly with their seemingly pointed irises; eyebrows which grew up instead of down at their outer ends. His long, almost emaciated hands were well kept, but too tapering at the fingers, and they clutched like locks around the long pasteboard box which he held under his arm.

“Still here? I have something for you to do.”

The voice was low, insinuating, though decided. It was the Greco-Morisco-Egyptian—Jean Baptiste Alla Dekkah, chemist and general pharmacist, on a rather wide street in the city of Paris, who spoke.

The young man addressed did not look up from his work, but went on diligently pasting labels on dark brown bottles. He had reached about the middle of his twenties, and must have been of about medium height, though that could not be judged, for he was sitting. He had black hair, blue eyes and a very small mouth. The dingy light from an oil lamp, which had an irregular wick, shone full in his face. It was a free countenance, but there was a fearful, hunted look in the blue of the eye, and a helpless anxiety in the relaxed, quick movement of the hands. He was the clerk of Alla Dekkah. His name was Pierre Agneau, and his mother was the concierge of the building on the Rue la Pérouse, where the young American singer, Julia Pembroke, lived.

The clerk said nothing, and the chemist went on, while he slowly opened the long pasteboard box and carefully lifted the heads of many large deep red roses.

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"There are one dozen American Beauty roses—very beautiful—very," he added, half to himself, while he darted a side look at the clerk, who had left his high stool and was now watching the pharmacist as he lifted the roses out and laid them in a row on the broad counter. There was no delicacy, no art, about this man. And as he continued to scrutinize the face of the clerk there was an ugly gloating gleam in the center of the pointed irises of the almond-shaped eyes.

Pierre looked at the roses with lingering eyes. They were so beautiful, so perfect. He loved the beautiful, and the roses looked like living creatures, twisted in soft, caressing velvet, spun on a magic loom in Paradise. They had hearts that throbbed far down in the center of all this outer loveliness. They were almost human, but they never whispered a prayer—this was what Pierre thought. Perhaps, though, in their beauty of form, of color, of perfume, they do pray—at least these are their offerings of praise to God.

The chemist counted them—one dozen. He held them six in each hand, saying: "You are the most brilliant and most earnest clerk I have ever had. If you continue with me for five years as you have the past two, I shall make you a joint-partner. Eh! does that not please you?"

The clerk, who had returned to his high stool, diligently continued his work. The chemist went on examining the roses; and, continuing, said:

"Pierre, this is what I have for you to do"—the chemist held up the dozen roses. "I will give you the two hundred francs—if you powder these flowers."

"Ah, oui, Monsieur, with all my heart. And I shall have the money—the two hundred francs?" he added, with a half timid, incredulous voice, not unmixed with awe.

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"The two hundred francs in gold are yours when one dozen roses are powdered. But this must be done to-night—not later than one hour and a half. *Morbleu!* it is easy."

The mother of the clerk, Pierre, had for the past four years collected, as concierge for the building on the Rue La Pérouse, the rentals due and paid quarterly by its lodgers. The proprietor had been the old Marquis de Vendoire. At the end of every three months he had come himself to get the rentals which the concierge had collected. He was never overbearing, but dignity and born station always walked with him. One year ago the old Marquis had died. He had left no ascending heir to the vast estate of Vendoire, on the Gironde, so the old Marquis had chosen a guardian, to be appointed after his death. The guardian was a shrewd man, an ex-banker and acting Exchange man. Now, the time as collector of the building of the deceased Marquis de Vendoire had changed, and the guardian never came in person. At the end of every three months an astute, haughty secretary demanded and pocketed, without civility, the collected sum. One year had passed, minus two weeks, since the death of the old Marquis, when the secretary came on his trimestrial call.

The unfortunate concierge had told him that she had lost two hundred francs; she had begged him to believe her story, that the missing sum must have fallen on the staircase, and that some stranger mounting at the same time must have seen the bank bills and picked them up. She had asked the secretary to take five months off her pay.

The secretary had said nothing. It was to be seen he disbelieved her, and he must have succeeded in making the guardian think as he did, for two days after

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his call the concierge had received a letter, which ran thus:

"Monsieur du Renarbeaumuseau, my secretary, tells me that in your collections for the three months just passed you have failed to deliver the sum due. Three weeks are given for the remittal of the missing two hundred francs.

[SIGNED] "J. E. MONTE, Executor of the Estate of the Late Marquis de Vendoire."

When Alla Dekkah offered Pierre two hundred francs if he would powder the roses, the agony of the mother at loss of her two hundred francs bore in upon the soul of the clerk, and that was why he had sprung from his stool and eagerly grasped the opportunity to furnish his mother with sufficient money to make good her loss—why! two hundred francs meant the saving of all that Pierre loved best in the world—his mother—from prison.

"Monsieur, how kind you are! I can never repay you." And the clerk went to where the chemist was standing, and, catching the long, emaciated hand in his, grasped it and shook it long—looking all the while steadily, half in adoration, into the unhealthy face of "his leader, his grace."

"There, my boy, I am glad to see you happy. When you asked me for the two hundred francs I thought of it each hour, and fate has willed it that I have been able at last to give it to you. It is nearing midnight—I go to the Madeleine—the Mass is at twelve—if any one should call for me, you know where to find me—at the church or on the way from the church. I will take the key with me. If any one knocks, you can open from within."

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The clerk was standing near the counter, looking at the roses and then at the chemist—so much kindness on the part of Alla Dekkah—so much beauty with the roses. By the expression of his face it was evident Pierre was thinking seriously about something he would like to ask. Suddenly, as if by force, his tongue was loosed: "Kind Monsieur, do you know my mother?"

"Yes," replied the chemist. "What? Speak, boy."

"Monsieur, she may go to the Madeleine; tell her, if you chance to see her, that Pierre has the two hundred francs." And the clerk hid his face in his hands.

The chemist walked over to where Pierre was standing, and, stroking his head in fatherly fashion, said: "My boy, that is all right. What you ask of me is noble. The two hundred francs are yours, and the old chemist does not care a farthing what becomes of the money."

While Alla Dekkah spoke he looked at himself in a small mirror just behind the clerk; then he walked quickly toward the door, put the key in the lock and said, as he stood in the door, prepared to step out: "Good-bye, Pierre. In one hour I will come back. The powder to be used by you in preparing the roses you will find in the jar with the 'X' label." He stepped out quickly, pulled the door to and turned the key.

Pierre, half-dazed, heard the retreating steps of the chemist on the sidewalk. He was frantic—"the 'X' label. Wretch—wretch—not to tell me before—to kill some person—to send an unprepared soul into eternity! Oh! Villain!—villain!"

He ran to the door and opened it. He would follow the chemist; he would tell him that he was not a murderer. He looked up and down the street, but the apothecary was not to be seen. He must have gone up the street, for he was going to the Madeleine. Then

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the clerk laughed at himself: "To trust the word of a villain! Have I not left my swaddling clothes?"

Now the chemist had anticipated all this; he knew Pierre was an honest French boy, and that not an iota of the ignoble was found in the composition of the tiniest fibre of his being. He knew that when Pierre had consented to powder the roses he had thought they were to be prepared for floral investigation—perhaps preservation of a rare kind of rose. Pierre had never thought of a poison.

But Pierre wanted money, for during the two weeks just past he had been almost crazed at the grief of his mother, and all this the chemist knew, since Pierre had asked him to lend him the two hundred francs.

When the apothecary had gone out of the pharmacy he reasoned that were he to remain in the store Pierre would most probably refuse to do it; but leave the clerk alone—with silence and just one hour from the coveted two hundred francs, and he—Pierre—would do it.

The chemist was not going to Mass. He might go to the church, enter and look around, kneel, and his lips move in prayer, but his face would never change expression. If in walking around in the church he should find himself face to face or in a direct line from the image of the Holy Virgin, or some saint, he would cross himself; for Jean Baptiste Alla Dekkah was well known and often recognized by a great number of people, and so, when he entered a church he must cross himself or be too keenly observed. And since Alla Dekkah did not always follow the path of lightness in his business—who knows?—maybe the very person who remarked that he did not cross himself would recognize him in some of his paths of darkness. Then in the windows of the pharmacy, on the rather wide street, would be hung placards, and the door would be locked. He—Alla Dekkah



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—would have been caught. So he crossed himself and affected grave piety whenever he entered a church. Midnight Mass lasted one hour—from twelve to one o'clock Christmas morning. But to-night, when Alla Dekkah would go to the Madeleine, he would search the main steps, he would look behind the columns at the front of the entrance, and, not seeing him whom he searched for, he would enter the church. He would only remain inside, however, a very, very few minutes; he would cross himself, kneel, articulate a labial prayer, rise, and would renew his search of the kneeling crowd as best he could without moving. Still not seeing the one for whom he was looking, he would glance around at the vast, vaulted, great nave, at the flickering lights of hundreds of tall waxen candles, at the gorgeous robes of the priests, at the small boys as they continually swung the censers to and fro, in which the sweet incense half burned and smoked, and then he would listen to a peal of music and a chorus of unseen voices, so as to foil any one who might have noticed his searching look. Then he would cross himself again and leave, for this scene spoke of another world, where the Devil does not belong.

Alla Dekkah was to meet near or about this hour of Midnight Mass, in the Madeleine, or lingering about its steps, a man very much like himself, except that this man had the good fortune to carry a Christian name, and, therefore, people trusted him; and, being shrewd and wily as Alla Dekkah himself, he had made a small fortune. But he was greedy, and this was why they met—these two—at midnight, to conclude a very long and cunningly contrived scheme, which was to end the life of a helpless old man.

With papers signed under duress, by which the stranger, as guardian of the old imbecile—which the sworn statement of the chemist, who acted as doctor,

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would verify the helpless (though sane) old man to be—could legally obtain for himself, as guardian, and Alla Dekkah, as doctor, the sum of 3,000,000 francs, which was to be parceled into halves between these two rascals. And this was why Alla Dekkah himself did not powder the roses—1,500,000 francs, his share of the old man's estate, was something more than 5,000 francs; for, even though the sifting of powder deep down between the petals of one dozen American Beauty roses was very easy to a chemist like Alla Dekkah, yet there was great risk of detection. Although Alla Dekkah only grabbed for great things, he was like all his kind, he was greedy for gain, and the promise of a sack of gold containing 5,000 francs was not at all displeasing to his avaricious instinct. Therefore Alla Dekkah had asked the clerk to do it, knowing that Pierre was in the direst need of two hundred francs. He was certain the clerk would do it; for he himself had fallen by a like occurrence, and Pierre was not as strong as he had been in his youth. He knew that when Pierre should realize it was poison that must be sifted upon the flowers, Pierre would follow him and tell him that he could not do it; so when the chemist left the door he crossed the street and turned into a passageway—a half alley.

He had reasoned rightly, for three seconds had not passed until the chemist, from his hiding place, saw the door open, saw the clerk come out and look up and down the street, saw him shrug his shoulders, turn and go back into the store, and then he heard the door close and the inside lock snap on its spring.

After Pierre shut the door he crossed over to the counter on which the roses lay. He put them into the box very carefully and one by one, then he laid the tissue over them, put on the cover and pushed the box to the farthest end of the counter.

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He would think no more about it—but his mother—what of her? How happy she would be if the chemist should see her and tell her that her son had earned—*earned?*—the two hundred francs. He did not speak aloud, but the meaning was very distinct to him. But, then, could he tell his mother how he had earned them? Would she ask? Maybe not—two hundred francs, so near—it sounded good to hear, two hundred francs. How little the world helped when one was in distress! Money!—money!

The clerk, Pierre, knew that the prison stared his mother in the face. A week and she would be taken, and, of course, convicted as a thief.

*Never! never!* he would die rather than see his mother lodged in prison. She had stood by him through six-and-twenty long, weary years. He would stand by her now. Yet he revolted from doing the one act that alone offered what he wanted—the two hundred francs. Who would help him? No one! No one! He remembered what the priest had said when he had gone and asked help of him: "My son, the sum you ask is large. I have no money, and I know no one from whom to get it. Trust in God."

"God"—the clerk almost hissed the word—"God, God—I asked God for help. Is this what I am to do—poison flowers—poison some human being—a priest—God—poison—death—my soul lost!" At this moment he disbelieved in the church. He said there was no God—all was false. Oh! poor humanity! What was government? He was becoming an anarchist. Who cared for him? Why should he care if he poisoned a human being? No, he cared not. He would poison any one to save his mother. He would do it.

He walked over to the counter and lifted off the lid from the box. He took out the roses; his hands worked

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rapidly while he carefully parted the outer petals, but his fingers were becoming unsteady, and as he went on he worked more slowly. He laid down the roses and went to where the black stone jar with the "X" label stood in the second row. He could easily reach it—why did he hesitate? It meant the two hundred francs, or the prison for his mother. He stretched up his arms, but they were not the arms or hands of a few moments past, for now they were very nervous hands, and a steady tremor shook his arms. He saw it and tried to shake it off, but it was not a spell to be waved off. It was the action of a struggling brain.

"How now!" and he jumped back without the jar. He had ejaculated aloud and his voice sounded hollow. It was some one else spoke, and yet he knew well that the weird exclamation had come from no one but himself. Something was climbing up to the ceiling. It had, no doubt, been walking on the cover of the jar, for the outside of the jar had kept company with the inside. The outside was dusty and black, and the inside was black with the baneful powder. It was a spider, not very large, not very small, and spiders, like *evil*, frequent the place of ill-kept solitude. Why had he been afraid of a spider? He could not answer. A chill shook his frame, and his eyes stuck out of their sockets. "Come, I will do it." He shook himself, and the hugely distorted thing which had held him tightly grasped let go. He was free now—he understood everything plainly now—he was to poison one dozen roses and receive two hundred francs—and his mother would not go to prison. That was all. He would do it.

His teeth set and his lips parted and drew back. The sinister gleam of two balls which started from their sockets told that what a mind willed a soul fought. His arms were steady now. He could trust himself, and he

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again reached for the "X" labeled jar with something of demonian pride. His fingers clasped around the jar—one—two—three—four—the clock of the shop was striking. He fell back and his outstretched arms hit heavily against his sides. Was this the ghost of his infancy, come to taunt him?—five—six—seven—the clock went on. It was unmoved—it was like the world—so cold!—so cold!—so unsympathetic!

"God!"—he fell on his knees—"hast Thou no pity? Help me!—save me—mercy! great God!"— But gladness came not. He had renounced God. He had renounced faith, and he forgot that the mind can no more momentarily change its convictions than a culprit can sham the part of innocence—than the earth retrace its revolutions—than a green blade become a red rose—than the soul belong to the Devil. It is the law of nature—it is the law of worlds—it is the law of the universe—everything that is natural is gradual, is created and lives thus.

Pierre was not altogether an extraordinary man nor an immortal being. He was a noble man, and in that he was extraordinary. He had a soul, and in that he was immortal; but in mind and body as a whole, he was an ordinary being—born guileless, capable of joy or despair, and dies innocent. This last—innocence—is often spotless, but more often stained.

Three more strikes and the clock would stop, and then there would be silence—Ten, sounded the clock in a low swing—it would strike twelve—the hour of midnight—the hour of Holy Mass—the hour his mother used to take him to the Mass of Christmas eve. He would take the tongue out of the clock—he would twist the wires—it should not mock him so. He went toward the clock, but recoiled—something was calling within him. "Pierre, remember the past—remember

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when you were a child, how your mother used to sing you to sleep. Remember when you went to Christmas Mass. Remember how your mother pleaded with you not to forget your prayers when you entered the army. Remember how happy you were one hour ago, before the devil whispered in at your ear. Pierre! forget not tonight to pray—pray now, Pierre—it is the Holy Hour.”

He covered his face with his hands, but tears would not come. He sank down in a chair. He ran his fingers through his hair, and pressed the two palms against either side of his head, as if he would crush in his skull.

He listened—the last stroke sounded, echoed and died away. He was alone, quite alone—the chemist would not return for a half-hour. Why was there something more than himself, more than this body, in the room? Fifteen minutes passed, and still he came to no conclusion. Every now and then he would move uneasily in the chair into which he had fallen. He seized its arms convulsively and stared around the room.

Pierre Agneau had been born in a little village in the center of France. When he was five years old his father had died and his mother had decided to go to Paris. She had quite a small fortune for a woman of her class—a fortune gained by dint of hard labor by her husband and saving by herself. Pierre should enter a monastery, for he was to become a priest. Had she ever seen herself a concierge, her son an apothecary's clerk, she never had left the small, quiet village sleeping on the Loire; but she saw herself in an apartment, her son a Bishop—maybe a Cardinal. Thus they had come and had settled in Paris. Pierre had gone to the schools, and at twelve had entered a monastery. Eight years had passed thus, when Pierre was twenty-one. He must enter the army, for he was a Frenchman. Pierre entered the army, but when he left it, three years later, he did not return to the

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monastery nor to the cozy apartment. He could not become a priest—he had seen life, and his mother's small sum had dwindled away, so that now she was the concierge of a building on Rue La Pérouse. Then Pierre had become the clerk of Alla Dekakh.

Why not kill the chemist when he would return and steal the two hundred francs? Pierre could easily choke him—choke him to death. It would be past midnight, and the policeman would be at the head of the rather wide street. Then he could have the two hundred francs, and he would not have to—poison—but—he would choke a man—he would kill a man. Then he would be a murderer and a thief—a cold-blooded murderer, too—horrible!—horrible!—it would be infinitely better to poison one dozen roses and gain two hundred francs.

Then the mind of the troubled man questioned so rapidly that the conscience could not answer.

Two hundred francs!—two hundred francs!—two hundred francs! Pierre, who are you? Who will give you that sum? Pierre, are you a fool? Why have you been so long? Come, but his voice had changed, his face was that of a culprit. Pierre of five-and-forty minutes past had gone.

He rose from this gloomy dialogue, where his mind had been the accuser and the soul the accused, walked to the counter where the roses were lying—his walk had changed—he turned his head every now and then and looked behind him. He walked over to where the stone jar stood upon the second shelf. He did not hesitate this time; he took it down and retraced his steps to where the roses lay so helpless in their innocence of the crime which they might be forced as accomplices to perpetrate. He gathered them up and disappeared behind

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the screen—he would not trust himself to let his eyes rest upon them.

Fifteen minutes slipped away, and the room, which had been so lately the struggle of a soul—now vanquished—was as silent as a tomb; but it was as it should have been, for it was the tomb of a soul.

Click—the key turned and a sallow face, with spider eyes, thrust its head in at the opening. It was Alla Dekkah, and, seeing no one, he came in and shut the door.

“Pierre, Pierre.”

“Well?” It was the new Pierre who answered, as he emerged from behind the screen. “Here they are. Where’s the money—the two hundred francs?”

“The—the party has not paid me yet,” the chemist hesitated a moment, and then went on: “They are waiting—they will give me the money when I give them the roses—see—then I will pay you”—Alla Dekkah moved cautiously toward the door.

“I will wait—you will come back.”

“Yes,” replied the chemist.

He was startled, the voice was so changed, so sinister. He was dangerous. How his eyes gleamed! But he would get over it. The first act had been a struggle; there would be no second—there never was a second. The chemist pushed the pasteboard box higher under his arm and went out the door, turned the key and went up the street. As he rounded a corner, had he been listening he would have heard a tightly fitting door close, but Alla Dekkah was thinking of the five thousand francs he was to receive, and he forgot almost everything except that he was to have five thousand francs in a few moments, and he grew rapaciously covetous. He would not part with one sou—two hundred francs to a clerk—preposterous! No such foolishness. He



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turned another corner; there was the cab as it had been prearranged.

"Thanks," said a muffled voice, and the figure in the cab handed, under cover of its palm, a leather bag toward the chemist.

His long, too-tapering fingers closed around the sack and he uttered a few incoherent words.

Evidently it was the same mantled figure which had given the chemist the long pasteboard box earlier in the night—some hour and a half earlier. As the cab drove away Alla Dekkah did not retrace his steps to the pharmacy, but went up the street in the direction of the disappearing cab. He chuckled as he pocketed the sack—it was heavy. Just then he passed one of the many lamp-posts which lined the small street, as they do all Parisian streets, whether large or small. The light from the lamp-post shone brightly, but the pedestal was thicker than the pedestals of the city lamp-posts usually are.

When the concierge of the building on La Pérouse had left the village of Lasource with her small boy, Pierre, she had left one faithful creature behind—her mother-in-law. She was very old—three-and-seventy had long since passed. This December, when she had come on her Christmas visit, the concierge had told her of the loss. She had listened, and, as was her custom, began to pray. It was all she could do. To-night at almost twelve o'clock the concierge had left for Mass. She went to a near by church, and the mother-in-law was left alone to guard the building and to say her prayers.

Thus it happened that a little after half-past twelve, the earliest minutes of Christmas morn, found a bent, old woman on her knees, uttering her soulful prayer, while a tall, sphinx-like figure, carrying a pasteboard

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box, looked in at the window of the lodge. She had evidently knocked, and wondered why the bent form did not come and open the door, for the cat which had been sleeping in front of the fireplace had gotten up to look out into the corridor.

As the old woman mounted the stairs to the second floor the figure which wore the half mantilla and carried the pasteboard box followed her.

"What is this creature? A woman, no doubt—she says she is, and that she is an American." Many such queries presented themselves in quick succession to be answered by the mind of the old woman. "No doubt, she is an American, and has just landed, for she has a long, loose cloak and the American abundance of veiling. That is the way so many thousands of Americans look when they tour in their big automobiles through my little village of Lasource. Miss White—what an odd name—but it sounds quite American. No doubt, this woman—this Miss White—and this Miss Pembroke are great friends over there in America." Here the old woman's eye fell on an American flag pinned on the outside of the mantilla close to Miss White's face. But the poor old woman was too worried with their loss to think more of Miss White or of what she was doing. Miss White had spoken clearly, and seemed to conceal nothing. It would be all right to let her in—the mother-in-law was from Touraine, and was innocent—too innocent—for Paris.

They had reached the second floor, and the old woman, while she fitted the key into the lock, eyed askance the tall mantled figure. There was no light in the corridor, except on the ground floor, for, in accordance with the custom of the place, all the hall lights were extinguished after ten o'clock; so the old woman was carrying a candle, and the small light cast moving shadows

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and barely outlined the lay of the surrounding walls and floor. There was, though, enough light to discern that the door which the old woman was unlocking did not communicate directly with the floor of the second landing. There were double doors, and the width of the passage was the same as the width of the doors. The stairs were spiral and curled up and down four stories above the second landing and two stories below.

Yes, she must be an American, for she spoke with an accent; besides, there could be no wrong in letting a young lady go into the apartment of a young lady she knew in America, and the mother would tell her daughter-in-law when she should return from Mass.

"Since Mademoiselle is a friend, I think it will be all right to let Mademoiselle in. There! the door is opened. Does Mademoiselle wish to take my candle, or shall I go in and turn on the light?"

"Oh, no; I have my flash light," answered Mademoiselle, with her odd accent.

"Mademoiselle, I will leave the key in the door, and when you are done, lock the door and bring me the key. I will be in the lodge. If you only wait a little, you may meet your friend, Mademoiselle Pembroke. She went to Holy Mass at the Madeleine; it has been at least fifteen minutes since the clock struck the half after twelve; she should be back in a little while."

The stranger gave a start and moved toward the dark room, but the old woman did not notice it, and went on: "She will be back, I am sure, and very soon, too; then you can speak with her."

"You are very obliging"—and the cloaked stranger pushed a gold piece into the shriveled hand of the bent form of the aged grandmother of honest Pierre Agneau, clerk in the pharmacy of Jean Baptiste Alla Dekkah.

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"Thanks," said the old woman; "you are very kind—kinder than is some of the world," and she gave a deep sigh, then continued: "Give me your blessing, generous lady; I thank you, but I can not take this money, for I have not earned it," and she handed back the gold piece. "God will bless you," said the stranger. The words were uttered mechanically, but the old woman received them with the word "Amen." The stranger went into the apartment and softly closed the door behind her.

She listened to the feeble steps slowly and totteringly descending the stairs by the aid of the small flickering light which the old woman carried in her trembling hand. What a different concierge from the one she had supposed she should find in such a building as this handsome apartment building on Rue La Pérouse, in the Etoile quarter of Paris! She must be carefully and artfully dealt with—prevarication must be used, and if that failed, falsification put in its stead.

Quick! to work! what if Miss Pembroke should return!

She flashed on the light. This was evidently the drawing-room, for there was a grand piano and other artistic furnishings, which spoke of the singer's studio. There were two large casement windows, and the curtains not being drawn, the balustrade of a balcony could be seen. The figure carrying the pasteboard box stood still and looked out of the window, and then she glided out of the drawing-room into the small boudoir; obviously, this boudoir was not suitable to her purpose, for she went into the bedroom, where she paused and looked around her. The room was large and airy. There was an extra wide casement window. A flash of the light revealed a heavy brass bed, a mahogany dresser, toilet-table and chairs to match. The curtains hanging at the window were écru lace and silk—the design, Cath-

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erine de Medici. There were also pale green padded curtains of a rich silk, which were not drawn.

On a small stand near the mantel stood a china vase. In the vase was a large bouquet of dark red roses, and for the first time the muffled intruder laid down the pasteboard box and made a movement as if to open the box, and then did not, but walked to the small stand and lifted the roses out of the vase. One of the flowers fell to pieces. She uttered a low growl, and, kneeling down, gathered up the petals; then the woman stood still and scanned the walls.

"There is a closet. Ha! ha! how stupid!" And going to the closet, she opened the masked door and threw the roses into it, shut the door carefully, locked it and slipped the key into her pocket, saying: "This closet will not open to-night. Ugh! what do I do?" For as she had come toward the closet, in passing a high-backed chair one of the roses had struck, and its petals had been scattered and had fallen partly on a sofa and partly on the polished floor. She quickly brushed the petals off the sofa and pushed them under it; but, turning abruptly, the train of the mantilla swept under the sofa, gathered up the petals and left them near the window. Then she closed her mouth, scarcely daring to breathe, and her hands worked rapidly as she parceled while she counted three, six, eight, twelve—the midnight visitor was almost purple in the face—she was holding her breath. She placed them in the vase and then lifted the vessel, put it on a low stand close beside the head of the bed and a little behind a large armchair.

Then hurriedly returning to where the pasteboard box lay, she pushed the lid on, and, rushing to the window, opened it and took a long, deep breath of pure, fresh air.

Then the neck grew long and slanting, and the body instinctively drew back—she was listening. There was a

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sound—footsteps on the pavement below—those of a young woman. No doubt it was Miss Pembroke. Yes, they were pausing at the entrance. Hark! the footsteps had ceased—the great door of the building closed with a jar—quick!—escape!—she must gain the main hall!—must get out of this apartment, at least, before the young woman should come upon this landing. The corridor was dark and it was near one o'clock. There were deep recesses in the corridor where she could hide.

She drew her head in and closed the casement hastily, but forgot to turn the lock. Three rooms were not many to cross, but the great outside door had already shut, and the incomer was mounting the stairs. There was the door of the apartment—she hurried toward it, but—there was a sound of a falling body, and then something happened—something which the intruder never forgot—a mighty roar of dissonance. In falling she had tried to save herself, and instinctively had thrown out her hands, which had struck the lowest keys of the grand piano. The woman uttered a low "*Diavolo*." She arose and at last found the door, opened it noiselessly, but she did not move out into the corridor, for some one was very near the door—a rustling of skirts—a sound of footsteps continued to mount the stairs.

Was it a woman? The corridor was too black to discern, and did the newly arrived person come toward this door? That was also uncertain, for the stairs led to floors above, and this door must be passed by one going to an upper landing; also, the walls were rounded, therefore there was an echo up and down the stairway, but an echo is a false voice—it is like everything that is false—not to be trusted.

## CHAPTER XV.

The clock outside the Madeleine, just in front of the steps leading up to the church, told the worshiper that the hour for the Midnight Mass was at hand; and many were the hundreds of believers who thronged its sacred portals, for the services held there in commemoration of the birth of the Founder of that belief, in which so many stately and magnificent churches have been erected. A goodly portion of those entering at the sacred portals was there, because of deep-seated devotion. These would rather have died than have found themselves deprived of the solace afforded by the fulfillment of their religious vows.

Others were there to listen to the glorious strains of music; the inspiration of some devotee of the religion of that Babe born upon earth some nineteen hundred years before, to bring harmony and peace among mankind. Though they might feel themselves not of the number of believers, whose names were found upon perishable books of organizations—broadly named the church—still they were, in truth, children of God—followers of Christ—full and firm believers in His faith; else they had not been out at midnight seeking entrance to set places of worship to hear the music—sacred music—which Christ's creed had inspired within the spiritual sense of musical minds. Then, too, there were others who were there simply because it was fashionable to go to the Midnight Mass or to the Opéra as part of the form of a *réveillon* or midnight party. Alverstone went, as he had always done when in a large city, because he was a lover of music, such as one hears at Midnight Mass. And, too,

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the great voices of the operatic world are heard to sing there then, and the organ, with its wealth of glorious music, is of itself sufficient to compensate for all difficulties overcome in order to be present at a Midnight Mass; and this organ music should be divine, for only those who are on the heights in ability to send out wave after wave of glorious music in thunderous rolls of the grand anthem, or in the rich, soul-stirring accompaniment, are ever permitted to preside at this organ of the Madeleine; and this, too, after the severest examination in the world—an examination of the most exhaustive nature. An attendance upon the Midnight Mass of the Madeleine in the city of Paris is an event never to be forgotten in the life of each person so favored, if judged only by the beauty which he hears from the organ loft.

Surely no one—Protestant or Catholic—ever heard the organ in the Madeleine and the singing at the Midnight Mass, and then went out of the church with an ignoble thought rankling within his breast.

God is worshiped in spirit and in truth, and not by methods. Religion is trust in God, and not trust in churches of any creed or form.

The Altar was resplendent with its mass of lighted candles and glittering gold; and, though it must strike a Protestant mind very differently from that which it represents to the Catholic mind, it yet carries to the Protestant mind first, the idea of Purity, and, second, the undying Faith of the devotee.

The front seats were filled by those whose movements indicated that they were active communicants of that belief, while in the rear of the church were many who, fully as earnest in their devotions as those in the front seats, were less numerous—some in pairs, others in groups, and too, many a lone figure knelt at the Midnight



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Mass perhaps the better to worship in this entire isolation.

The space back of the seats was more than comfortably filled with the very large number of those, most of whom came only for a few minutes.

Alverstone had gone up quite a distance on the right side of the church and formed one of the many standing there. As yet only what, to Alverstone, were simply motions of the priests at the High Altar, were to be seen; so he looked about him in a quiet, unobtrusive manner. After a survey of the church in general he turned his attention to the people about him.

There was the old woman of humble birth, but with the calmness of peaceful trust in God, lighting her face, for which the most powerful potentate must envy her: she was there to celebrate in spirit and in truth the birth of the Babe, whose advent upon earth meant "Peace and good will toward men." And this she believed, and in this peace her soul rested.

Yonder stood the man of fashion, and a little beyond was another, seated. They were of the same mold—nothing of Nature's hand was visible about them, for the hand of Fashion had made them from one mold. Poor fellows! no doubt, they were doing their little in a devotional way, the result, perhaps, of many generations of devout ancestry; but, so far as they were concerned, there remained only to them the form, for they were very curiously ruled by their abnormally developed faculties of self-esteem.

Then there were many from among those who are known as the class who never toil, who never spin, who live—as they say—by divine right.

Everywhere Alverstone turned his head were to be seen markedly representative persons from every walk of life.

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Suddenly his ear heard not the discourse of eternal life as spoken to his soul by the powerful organ, though it continued transmitting the heavenly message as before; for the harp of a thousand strings had ceased its function, and Love—beauteous goddess—had taken up the harp of Life and had struck the deepest, strongest, the most passionate chord of that harp—the Chord of Love.

Seated some little distance before him was Julia Pembroke.

He had often wondered if there was such a thing as crushing love, or if it were not a something which was capable of manufacture only. But now he told himself it was a reality, and that he himself had felt its power—nay, was feeling its crushing weight at this moment, and as truly as ever did any lover of whom he had ever read or heard. He felt sick at heart. A girl of her will-power would not be easily persuaded to forsake her musical career for the life of a woman at the head of a home, nor would she be willing to divide her life between devotion to her art and devotion to a husband and his interests. “No,” he thought on, “she is beyond me; I am sure no amount of persuasion will suffice to win her.”

He looked at the neat, trim, young woman, wrapped in the solitude of her own contemplations. He felt himself in love with the pretty little hat upon her daintily poised head; with the swelling roll of rich golden hair; with the comb and pins which held it firmly in a neat coiffure; with those exquisitely delicate pink shell ears, set so beautifully upon the sides of the head; and, above all, with that inexplicably perfect poise of the head upon the shapely neck. And only the most queenly of queens, he thought, ever had such shoulders.

Alverstone saw by a glance around him that the beautiful young woman was admired by more pairs of eyes than those of himself, and he gathered courage to

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move forward, until he hoped their eyes might meet. And then—he felt that he would be very proud indeed to exchange smiles; and, if perchance she should speak, that would be supreme. She might not like him to address her here. True, she was a Protestant, like himself, but he felt she was a great respecter of all forms of the Christian religion.

Without knowing just how, he found himself in the seat behind her, but a little to her left; then leaning forward, he addressed her with: "Good evening, Miss Pembroke."

Julia at once turned, and, putting her hand before her mouth, said: "Merry Christmas, Mr. Alverstone. Come sit beside me here."

Alverstone arose and took the seat made vacant by Julia, for she had been seated in the end, and had moved in to make a place for him. His cup of delight was full; he was seated beside this American singer—this girl whom he loved as no man ever before loved, he thought.

She had been much surprised to find him there in the seat behind her, but she betrayed no surprise, for, having spent the past six years in the heart of the city of Paris, she was what Victor Hugo pronounces "a Parisian," and Parisians are never off guard in matters of etiquette.

The choir here ceased singing, but the organ continued.

"I am fortunate to find myself here to-night. One would think we had met by appointment," said Alverstone.

Julia looked up at him and smiled; then, after a pause, in which neither spoke, she whispered: "I have attended a Midnight Mass each Christmas I have been in Paris, but"—she leaned closer toward him and held up her little portemonnaie before her mouth, while she whispered be-

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hind it—"and this is the first time I have been so fortunate as to have a gentleman with me."

Then she felt her face glow richly, for Alverstone had glanced at her very abruptly, and she feared from his motion that she had said more than he had expected her to say.

"I wish you would allow me the right to be with you—by your side—every Christmas eve in our future," he answered. Then he leaned closer toward Julia and said, in continuation: "Be my bride. Answer yes. Will you?"

The corners of Julia's mouth drew back so sweetly that Cupid would have lingered in admiration were he not at this instant in most strenuous action; but she spoke no reply to the words of Alverstone, nor did she look at him. A pallor now took the place which an instant before had glowed in the warmth of loving confusion; but, though she spoke not, he had been pleased with the thought which he knew held her.

Then there was a silence for some time, and each gave attention to the service, when suddenly he addressed Julia with the remark: "I thought you were at the *réveillon* at Madame Nitolsk's."

"Oh, no," replied Julia; "Madame Nitolsk's little child, Adino, was very ill yesterday afternoon."

Now all singing and chanting had ceased, but peal on peal from the organ loft rolled in sublime swellings of the glorious music.

Julia, sitting beside Alverstone, under the spell of this divine in the beautiful of organ music, found herself drawn closer and closer within the loving bond which seals two happy hearts; she found herself experiencing the loneliness of her condition without—without him in her life—in close, quick touch with every day of her future. Her art—ah! her art! what had she to do with art when it was placed in the balance and against an

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affair of the heart—an affair of life or death? For without Alverstone life were a failure, and to her failure meant death. While with him she could see her future, bright, beautiful and useful to the fullest extent possible. Art—dear, dear, beautiful art of song faded far off—adown a long vista—ever diminishing to the point of vanishing. Yet she cared not. The Maestro Novara's wishes were not even favored with a passing thought; and consideration of Madame Cinati's opinions upon the matter were in company with thoughts of Maestro Novara—forgotten. In fact, she scarcely saw anything but the splendid young man at her side, and she heard little now but the delicious melody contained in the words: "Be my bride. Answer yes. Will you?"

No music ever written by any of the inspired writers could equal the beauty of these seven words just spoken by Hampton Alverstone to Julia Pembroke.

She urged upon herself that there was nothing wanting in this man, who would be her choice among a million. She knew he was her ideal. She might not in a lifetime again know such a man and in such a relation to her. She raised her head and turned half toward him, but did not look at him. She wanted to speak, but something, seemingly in the air, disturbed her. She struggled desperately within herself for freedom from the grasp of that terrible something. Finally, she turned and looked up at Alverstone, when she thought she felt the air around her clear.

But soon again came the giddy desire. She seemed to lean toward him; she felt herself in truth inclining her body toward him, and she knew that she was not at all annoyed by the sensation. On the contrary, she thought it to be her right, if she wished to do so, for was not he her husband, if only a very short ceremony were performed! And were not the ceremony easily performed,

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if only she would promise—if only she would pronounce the monosyllabic word, in answer to his suit for her hand in marriage? He was her fellow-countryman, and they were of the same social rank in the home-land, and they loved; and if only she would answer, they were the founders of a new home—if only she would answer “yes.” She believed she would do so. How could she ever master that overwhelming desire always to have him by her side? No, she could not do it. She could live without song, but she could not live without this man—this man who had offered her his fortune, his position, his name; but, best of all, his love—the love of a man of sterling worth. And he loved her for herself—he knew nothing of her money—so he loved her for herself—herself alone. And she was sure that his wealth had never influenced her in the least, for she was wise, and knew that the lyric soprano who was finishing with Maestro Novara would have much money—far, far more than she could possibly use. And so she was not forced to marry for money—it was love—pure love—this she knew.

Here Julia awoke from her love dream, for there floated out upon the air—soaring far up into the uttermost heights of the magnificent edifice—filling all space within and thrilling the worshiping souls with its blessed truths, told in a setting of richest melody: “*Minuit, Chrétien c'est l'heure solennelle Où l'homme Dieu descendit jusqu'à nous.*” The rich tones of the great barytone of the Opéra sounded forth from the choir like the call from a sublime clarion.

He was praising his Master with his God-given talent, for no one who heard him on that Holy eve could have thought him other than inspired in the singing of the sacred song.

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Julia's face was instantly transformed. Not a trace of the power of undying love for the man at her side remained, and she seemed a glorified saint sitting there and waiting for her transfiguration.

"Ah!" she thought; "there is the secret of my suffering. This prelude, to which I gave no heed, but which bore in upon me—in through my unconsciousness—in upon my delirium of joy—this prelude to my dear dead father's song." She moaned the last two words, and an accompanying tear gathered and overflowed upon her cheek, then another and another chased in such quick succession that she put up her soft kerchief and caught them before they had time to tell their tale of sad memories. The reactionary force of the regretful thought that in her love-reverie she could be mute to that favorite song of her dear departed father would not pass without first swaying an emotion of tender, filial devotion to his memory; for Bertram Pembroke had loved to sing this song, and it had been Julia's happiest hour when she had played an easy accompaniment to his singing of it.

And to-night she had heard no music except the melody of her love, which ran to the accompaniment—the love of Alverstone. In this state of ecstatic bliss how was she to know that the organ had taken up the prelude to that beautiful Christmas hymn—"Noël"? Oh! fatal hour! In these sweeping recollections of her father's last night upon earth. "Darling, darling papa," she thought; "I shall not forget what you told me of my dear mother's wishes. I am a singer, papa, and I will sing."

Almost simultaneously with the thought, she turned to Alverstone and said, quietly and kindly: "Mr. Alverstone, I can not marry any one. If I had not come to this decision long before now, I am sure that I should be happy to become your wife; but I am married to my art, and can not accept an offer in marriage." Unshed

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tears in her eyes were visible to Alverstone, and he believed what she said.

He had been listening to the singing of "Noël" with much interest and delight, for he was at rest—he was so sure that Julia would answer in the affirmative. He knew her to be incapable of trifling, and he was certain, that smile she had given when last she had turned her eyes upon him meant peace to his love-sick soul; so that when she had turned and had given her answer in the negative, he was for a time hopelessly lost in confusion.

But he quickly recovered his wonted equanimity of spirits, and, smiling kindly upon her, said: "Very well, Miss Pembroke; I am glad, however, to know that I have no rival but your song, and when you tire of my rival I hope I shall not be forgotten. I shall love you always—always."

Julia smiled, and the smile lit her face and eyes alike. Alverstone had learned to love this smile, for its own sake as well as for the reason that it was representative of the thought—the living part—of the woman whom he had loved the instant his eyes had fallen upon her and whom he had loved every instant of his life since.

Then she spoke and said: "Thank you; I am sure that I love you equally well."

Alverstone sat very still for some moments after Julia's reply to his little speech of acceptance of her final decision. Then he felt himself growing dizzy—the Altar, its candles, the moving priests in front of it—all were growing indistinct. He thought he had become faint. He bent toward Julia and said: "I am very sorry, Miss Pembroke, but I find I must leave you."

"Ah! indeed!" replied Julia; "I should like you to remain. A Merry Christmas to you, Mr. Alverstone."



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"Thank you, Miss Pembroke; the protection of all the spirits of Christmas go with you, and may only happiness attend you."

Julia smiled again, but Alverstone saw it not, for he was very dizzy; and, though he looked at her, her face was not distinct. In fact, he would not have known her. After the exchange of good nights he went toward the door.

The song went on in an almost martial rhythm:

*"Le monde entier tressaille d'espérance."*

Before reaching the door Alverstone was forced to stand aside and wait the passing of a number of persons at that moment coming into the church. While he waited the cool, fresh air coming in at the open door revived him, and he felt the faintness pass. He turned and looked back at Julia, for from his position he could see more than half of her face, and it was worth his while to stop and look. Though the people entering the church had passed on, and he could have gone out, he had forgotten to move, or else he preferred to stay.

Julia, all unconscious of anything but the song then singing, had given herself up to the sentiment therein contained—that sacred song—sacred because it told so sweetly the story of God's gift to man, and sacred because it was a memory of her father. How could her face wear other than an expression celestial when all within her soul was in communion with her dead father—her dead mother—her beloved grandmother? There, too, was her Savior, before Whose throne, in the heaven of her belief, she saw the group of her dear dead ones adoring. Yes, there was surely a halo surrounding Julia Pembroke as she sat within that church and held this sweet communion with the saints above.

Alverstone saw it and felt the truth—that he loved a very superior kind of woman.

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"*Noël! Noël! voici le Rédempteur,*" went on climbing to the heights in the climax.

Alverstone thought Julia no longer in the flesh. He was glad that he had gone from her side, if only at a distance he was permitted to behold this transcendent beauty.

A number of persons who had just entered filled the seat behind Julia, and now Alverstone could no longer see her face, so he went out and away from the most impressive scene of his life. He was not entirely free from a feeling of disappointment at failure to win the consent of Julia to become his bride, but he was yet happy in the knowledge that she would marry him if she ever married any one; and, too, he had only her career for a rival—happy thought—happy thought.

He knew that the word of a gentlewoman of his native land was sacred as her honor, and that when to this gentility was added integrity of will and purpose, implicit confidence might be reposed therein.

When Julia stepped from her cab at the entrance of her apartment house it was a quarter of the second hour of Christmas morn. The driver was kind, and for the small gratuity, which Julia never failed to give, he showed his gratitude by descending from his high-little seat to ring the bell three times, as Julia had directed—three rings being the number by which the concierge should know it was Miss Pembroke who rang. Julia was permitted the use of the cab until the door of the house opened, which was immediately after the ringing; but sometimes it was not so soon, for then the concierge slept sounder than usual.

As the ponderous door swung to again Julia went to the spot where the concierge always put her key, if Julia was returning from opera or other affairs after ten

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o'clock, which was the hour for the putting out of lights in the corridor and halls. She saw a light in the lodge of the concierge, and, thinking this signified illness, her first impulse was to make inquiry if anything unusual had happened; but again she thought it partook of the curious, so she went on to get her key. It was not there, She flashed her electric light around, thinking it might have fallen upon the ground, but it was not there. Then she went toward the lodge door, glad that she had an excuse to speak with the inmates before she went upstairs. At the same instant she had turned, the concierge opened the door and came out. She handed Julia the key, saying: "Pardon, Mademoiselle; I forgot to put out the key."

Julia saw by the light of the lodge that her face was swollen from passionate weeping, but the concierge quickly turned her back, evidently with the desire to hide her face, and Julia hesitated to intrude upon her affliction. She took her key and started to go upstairs. Then a flood of golden meaning of this night—the sentiments of Christmas eve—filled her soul, as with a burst of dazzling sunshine; all earthly sentiment was gone as shadows before the radiance of brilliant glory of a summer's sun.

She turned and asked: "Is any one ill?"

"Oh, no, Mademoiselle; but I have lost two hundred francs, and I must replace them or go to prison. It is rental I had collected from the lodgers. It must have dropped on the stairway, for I can not find it in the lodge, and, Mademoiselle, I must go to prison if I do not get it. Pierre, my son, tried to borrow it; but even the priest, our only helper, could not aid us—he has no money at all, he says."

She had turned on a small electric light near the foot of the stairs, and Julia could see that she was almost

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distracted in her grief. Julia could not interrupt the volubility with which she had delivered herself of this torrent of woe. The young American singer could not witness anguish and offer no means of alleviation, on this especial occasion, under the sweet influence of her experience at Midnight Mass, where she had enjoyed not only the highest of earthly sentiments, but where she had also communed so intimately with joys celestial that she had seemed to be entirely absent from her earthly habitation—the body.

She quickly decided on a plan. She had listened to the story of the grief-stricken woman.

“Stay here till I come back.”

Almost immediately she returned, and, standing on the second step from the bottom, where the electric light shone full upon her, the concierge thought of pictures of angels, and well she might, for had not Julia—the immortal part of Julia—been that night where only the purified may hope to come? Had she not been with the saints in Paradise, and was she not now performing an act, the outgrowth of those most beautiful sentiments—the sentiments of the teachings of her Savior, in Whom she trusted?

“Here,” said Julia, holding out her right hand, with the back upward and the fingers closed tightly over something hidden within.

But the concierge only looked at her in bewilderment and in saddest dejection.

Then Julia bent forward, and, putting out her left hand, said: “Give me your hand.”

The woman timidly lifted up her right hand, and Julia, taking it, put the treasure, hidden in her own right hand, into it.

“There,” she said, closing the fingers of the concierge over it; “there is American gold. Take it to the pro-

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prietor's agent and he will know. It is more than two hundred francs. This will pay your two hundred francs due him, and he will give you back some money."

The concierge looked from the two bright American pieces to the beaming face of her savior, for Julia had saved her from the prison—and in this was her savior. On that blessed night the concierge was made doubly blessed—blessed for the gift of the Savior—the Dove of Peace—Who had redeemed her soul, and blessed for the gift of two pieces of American gold—two double eagles—which redeemed her body.

Julia had kept this little bag of gold, which had been given her by her father on their last evening together, for Madame Cinati had asked her to do so; at least she had asked Julia to draw upon her bank account, at *Crédit Lyonnais*.

The concierge clasped her hands tightly and prayed a sincere prayer for Julia—for her health—for her success—and especially did she invoke all the saints of her calendar to watch over Miss Pembroke and to keep her from all harm.

As Julia was making the turn at the first landing on her way to her apartment, she looked down at the praying figure which knelt in humble supplication, in thankful supplication, and smiled good night. Then she went up to her apartment on the second floor.

Some time after Julia had retired she was awakened by strains of music. She heard the music, but a lassitude prevented her having full control of her powers. She tried to think, but she could not think well. She told herself it was only the heavy sleep after the nervous strain of the eventful night. Then she thought the music sounded clearer than was usual. She wondered if she could have left the casement window ajar. She tried to rise and go to see if she had neglected to secure the

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knob, but her body refused to obey her will. Then she felt thoroughly aroused in her mind, but still her body remained motionless. Again the stupor seized her, but now she knew that she must rise or succumb to its treacherous embrace. She continued her endeavors to move, until by sheer force of will alone she succeeded in getting out of bed and staggering to the window. When near it her foot slipped on something—it was the bruised rose petals, swept by the mantilla of the late intruder and deposited just upon the spot where Julia had set down her foot in staggering to the window—and she found herself falling.

She put out her hand and caught at the sofa near the window and fell among the cushions, a number of which were upon the end where her head struck. One arm hung over the sofa and almost closed the window, which had been pushed open by the night breezes wafted in at the casement, left unlocked by mistake.

Julia had heard the pretty music—she had heard that beautiful serenade, "Mattinata," and after the serenade, Chopin's Nocturne, Opus 9—they were both favorite selections of hers, and, whether meant for her or not, she loved to listen to them.

And who is there that would not love such music, played upon a violin, a flute and a beautiful harp—upon the still night air?

For a time, from her place upon the sofa, she could hear the serenade, but it grew fainter and fainter; then clouds floated all about her—soft, fleecy, white clouds, and the nocturne seemed to be sung by many thousands of seraphic voices, far off. Soon she felt herself becoming an infinitesimally small chord, as it were—she had lost all sensation, and was dead except for very slight sensations in the brain and in the spinal cord, and this

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condition remained clear to her but for a short time, when she lapsed into utter unconsciousness.

Though the beautiful harp had begun its solo in a third number of the serenade, and the dulcet music went on, Julia Pembroke heard it not. It was like the great cataract, Niagara, which made no sound until there were ears to hear it.

## CHAPTER XVI.

About ten o'clock Christmas morning there was a loud pounding at the right-hand door on the second floor of the apartment building on the Rue La Pérouse.

One would naturally suppose that a door of wood must quickly give way before such ponderous strokes of the hammer, brought down upon the chisel with which the locksmith was endeavoring to procure an entrance to the apartment behind those doors, but they were made of the strong wood from the trees grown in the forests of Auvergne, and doors made of such wood are not to be driven into defeat of the purpose for which they were fashioned. The doors were paneled, and the locks and hinges were of the hardest of metals, and not at all likely to fail in their purpose unless the cruel file was set to work upon them.

Of course, a cutting instrument will always make its way through the hardest substance, no difference how adamantine its properties of resistance.

Before this house had become a place for homes of those who wished to rent, it had been the private palace of the Duquesa de la Tarazana. This great lady had held a real court, over the doings of which she had presided with grace and dignity, until one sad evening when she had eaten freely of that favorite French dish—cold fish—she had taken ill and suddenly died.

This entire building was unlike other apartment houses, for it had been built by this Duchess, and was a quasi-mediæval palace, fully equipped throughout as were the ancient fortresses.



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"Take off the lock. No difference what Monsieur Monté will say. It is a life."

It was Madame Cinati's voice, sweet, clear, but imperious.

Then the regular sound of the unloosing of screws began. It was, without doubt, a locksmith, for the turn screw worked steadily and the screw did not fall to the ground, as it always does if the workman is not well versed in the secret deftness of his trade.

Above the din and rattle of the workman's prying, twisting, hammering, pushing and lifting of the parts concerned in gaining admittance to the apartment wherein was the American singer, the concierge's voice was heard, but the words were inaudible, for she seemed speaking to herself.

Madame Cinati's clearly enunciated words came floating out over the noise, with a distinctness as beautiful as they were imperious.

"Did you see Miss Pembroke last night?" she asked of the concierge.

"Ah! oui, Madame; I talked with her when she came in from the Midnight Mass," half chattered the frightened concierge, in answer.

"Had she dined out?"

"No, Madame, I think not. She said nothing of it to me."

"Did she look ill when you gave her the key?"

"Oh! no, Madame; she looked beautiful and smiled like the angels in Saint Cecilia's picture."

"Pardon, Madame," broke in the locksmith; "there is an inside bolt. Shall I file it?"

"Is that the only way?" she asked, in reply.

"Yes, that is the only way."

"Can not you find a quicker method? Mademoiselle may die while we are working."

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"'MON DIEU! JULIA IS DEAD!"

## AN AMERICAN SINGER IN PARIS.

"No, Madame, there is only this way, unless you allow me to cut a hole in the panel to put my hand in at and pull open the inside bolt."

"Do as you think is the best and quickest," said Madame Cinati; "I'll see that all losses are made good."

"I would file the bolts," said the locksmith.

"Very well," replied Madame Cinati.

The workman took up the file and worked vigorously. In a very short time the bolt was cut in two and the heavy door swung in upon the massive hinges.

Madame Cinati entered first, casting her glance now here and now there around the room. She carried a large bundle, neatly wrapped, and hurriedly put it upon the sofa. Then with much alacrity she went into the boudoir. The concierge, whose bearing was one fearful of finding she knew not what, yet certain it was something of a direful nature, and still more certain it concerned one she dearly loved, followed Madame Cinati. Seeing no one in the boudoir, Madame Cinati crossed to the bedroom door and opened it.

"Mon Dieu! Julia is dead!" she exclaimed, standing perfectly still just inside the room, and her hands thrown up in horror.

Julia, clad in her night-robe, was lying among the cushions as she had fallen when she had slipped upon the rose petals. Her face was very purple and the golden hair had fallen in a mass around it.

"Oh, Julia! Julia!" cried Madame Cinati, taking her by the shoulders and shaking her gently at first, and then more forcibly, until in her anxiety she at last shook her almost fiercely. But Julia gave no sign of consciousness; she heard nothing whatever of the anxious friend's appeals for her to speak.

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Madame Cinati, finding that she could not rouse Julia, said: "Go for the doctor, Dr. Hertzborne—fetch me some wine, concierge; I'll try to get some into her mouth."

Suddenly stopping, on hearing nothing, Madame Cinati found she was alone, for the concierge had gone. She arose, and, going out to the door, saw that the concierge was literally flying down the steps. She returned to Julia, quite sure that it was for the doctor the concierge had gone; but on reëntering the bedroom from the fresh air in the hall she wondered why she had not before noticed the heaviness of the atmosphere within the room. She went directly to the casement window and opened it wide. The cool, fresh air now swept in, as the sun had done, when the concierge before had pushed back the heavy curtains.

Then the great singer knelt down by Julia and continued her efforts at reviving her.

As soon as the concierge had seen Julia she had fled and had run for the nearest doctor. She had not found him, but she had left an order, and he would come soon. She had hurriedly returned to the lodge and picked up her own little medicine case and some wine, which the frightened mother-in-law had in readiness as soon as her daughter had told her, and, breathless, the concierge rushed up to the apartment to do what she could.

"Monsieur, the doctor, will come soon," she panted, as she rushed into the room. "I brought this box of medicine, and here is a vinaigrette; it may help to revive her. Oh! but she has not moved," half sobbed the concierge, as she bent over Julia and looked into her face. "I fear she may never come to again."

"Well, we will do all we can. What have you in the bottle?"

"It is wine. I got it out of the cellar. It is very good—the finest, Madame."

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While saying this she poured out some wine into a glass.

"Get that cup on the mantel and put the wine into it; I can get it to her mouth much more easily," said Madame Cinati, who was chafing Julia's hands and forehead and trying to arouse her, but Julia moved not. She took the cup of wine, and, lifting Julia's head, tried to put it between her lips.

"Oh, no!" objected the concierge; "Madame can not do it that way. I will show Madame, if she will allow me."

"How?" asked Madame Cinati, for she had seen that she could not get Julia's mouth open.

"A minute, Madame, if you please," said the concierge. She left the room and soon returned with a silver spoon, which she put into the cup, saying as she did so: "I will open Mademoiselle's mouth and the Madame will put in very little sips of the wine, very, very little. It will trickle down her throat and yet not strangle Mademoiselle."

This they did, until a teaspoonful had disappeared—the concierge constantly massaging the throat and moving the head from side to side very gently, doing all in the deft manner of a trained nurse.

"Here, if Madame tries this salts, I know it will be good."

Madame Cinati took the bottle and placed it to Julia's nostrils.

"There," she said; "you rub her hands gently, but firmly, and I'll rub her face. I think we can revive her."

After some minutes of persistent effort at resuscitation, Julia turned her head to one side.

"Ah! she is coming back!" cried Madame Cinati. "Julia! Julia!" she said, in a soft exclamation. She spoke softly, because she did not wish to excite her.

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Julia's eyes opened slowly, but the clear blue of the eye was lost in a misty haze which spread before it.

"Ah! — Madame — Ci—nati." she said, weakly, with the faintest shadow of a smile, drawing the lips apart, but the muscles quickly relaxed. Instinctively Julia tried to draw together her gown, which was low at the neck and open, as she had unfastened it, when she was struggling with her depression of spirits and trying to fall asleep.

"Julia! Julia! what is the matter? Are you ill?"

"I — do — no—t — — know," she answered plaintively, while her eyes opened and closed wearily.

"You sent for the doctor, did you not?" anxiously asked Madame Cinati, as she turned toward the concierge.

"Ah, oui, Madame; he will be here soon. I went to five doctors, and he was the only one I could find. His maid said that he would return soon and that she would tell him to come over at once."

"Give me the cup," said Madame Cinati to the concierge. "Here, Julia, you must not close your eyes and go to sleep again. Come, rouse yourself," she added, in tones very urgent and quite strongly vocalized.

Julia could not take the wine; in fact, she was too weak to do anything at all, so the concierge raised her head and held it carefully supported, until Madame Cinati gave her several teaspoons of the strong, old wine. Julia offered no resistance, for she had regained consciousness enough to know that she must obey Madame Cinati or again drop into unconsciousness.

The deadly poison from the roses had nearly done the work it never fails to do when sent out by a diabolical character, who passes for a student of the nature and resultant of drugs—especially of the drugs known as narcotics.

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Had Julia fallen with her head toward the open window she would have breathed more fresh air; as it was, she had fallen with her head away from the window, and, consequently, breathed only the air which had circulated through the room. No doubt she had died from the poisonous fumes had not the fresh air from the window slightly ajar kept wafting fresh draughts of life-sustaining oxygen into the chamber, which otherwise had been the death chamber of her whom the Savior looked upon as a disseminator of the truths of His message to His wayfaring children of the world, wherein had been placed Julia Pembroke on a happy Christmas morning, twenty-two years before.

Many a noble Christian act had been suddenly shut out from the scenes of life had the cloaked stranger, who placed the flowers within the room, taken greater pains to fasten tightly the knob when closing the casement window.

The black angel, or angel of darkness, which attended the creature upon this errand into the abode of the pure child of God was defeated in his purpose by the angel of Life, whose mission upon earth was the protection of the child of Light, who began each day of her life with a prayer for protection, and who, each night, placed herself under the protection of the Being in Whom she trusted implicitly. She was not of those who wildly pray for help, but do nothing for themselves—oppositely, she first did everything she might do, then trusted fully.

"How early you have come," said Julia, who now seemed able to speak, but not so fully recovered as to be able to open her eyes. Then murmuring something inaudible, a smile played about the delicate mouth. Soon the lips half parted, and she went on: "You heard the music?"

"Oh! Holy Virgin!" ejaculated the concierge, clasp-



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ing and unclasping her hands repeatedly; "the poor darling is delirious."

"No — I — am — not — delirious," said Julia, brokenly. "You heard — the — beauti—ful — a harp — a — vi—o—lin — and"—

She turned appealing eyes upon Madame Cinati, who now stood up and said: "Go quick for some other physician. Tell him Madame Cinati will pay him well for coming at once—any doctor you may find."

"They were playing when you came in, for—they only stopped a few minutes — ago," said Julia, very slowly.

"Yes, yes, Madame, I will go at once," replied the concierge; and she left the room.

As Madame Cinati stood there, seemingly at a loss to know what more to do before the coming of the doctor, she was certainly a beautiful woman, in her magnificent velvet costume, with its long train; the beautiful royal ermine stole; the large black velvet hat, covered with glossy black plumes, arranged as only the artists on Rue de la Paix know how to arrange them; her long black kid gloves pulled half way to the elbow, which she had kept on, only withdrawing the hand enough to allow her using her bare hands upon Julia. She walked across the room twice, then returned to Julia and stood looking down at her, her face truly sad.

"You came to wish me a Merry Christmas," Julia spoke measuredly and without opening her eyes. "So kind of you."

"Yes, I did," answered Madame Cinati, putting her ermine stole around Julia's shoulders, for Julia was trying to rise, and the air of the room was cool for one who had been among the pillows as had Julia.

At last, assisted by Madame Cinati, Julia succeeded in getting upon one elbow, and the concierge, having just

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returned, brought a foot-stool, and together they placed her so that she was in a sitting posture.

"Oh! my beautiful Mademoiselle," softly whispered the concierge, tearfully, as she arranged a comfort over Julia's lap and around her feet, "I prayed for you all night—I could not sleep—I was so happy—and it was you, Mademoiselle, that made me so happy. Thanks to God you are getting well."

Julia smiled at the earnest woman, and then looked questioningly at Madame Cinati. A shadow of fright was visible for an instant, then the same questioning appeal. Her eyes did not weary and close this time; but, instead, grew strangely large and bright as she lifted them from Madame Cinati to fasten them upon the concierge with the same questioning appeal. Then the steady light of reflection shone in them, and she looked at the open window, the medicine chest, the wine. A sense of something vaguely entering her mind seemed seizing upon her.

She pressed the palms of her two small hands against her temples, then let the left one slip down and rest against the cheek, while the other fell to her lap, and she slowly looked around in silence, which no one broke until she asked in a weird, scared voice: "Have I been sick?"

No one answered, for her lips remained parted and she seemed trying to say more. Madame Cinati was now thoroughly frightened, for she thought that Julia had sustained a stroke of paralysis; but she remained quiet, preferring to hear Julia speak all she could, if this were her true condition.

After a time, Julia asked, wonderingly and as if she were sadly confused: "Have I been unconscious?"

While saying this she looked steadily at the handsome diva.

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"Yes, dear," replied Madame Cinati, "you have been unconscious. Do you remember when you took ill?" she questioned, anxiously.

Julia made no answer, but, trembling as with a chill, she huddled back into the cushions, saying: "I am cold—so cold."

"We must take her into the boudoir," said Madame Cinati.

Soon Julia found herself before the warm fire of the *salamandre* burning brightly in her boudoir, and Madame Cinati had closed the door opening into the bedchamber, which had well-nigh been the death chamber of the young American singer.

Madame Cinati stood beside the chair, resting one hand upon its high back and looking away from Julia, who had fastened her eyes upon the prima donna.

Julia saw that Madame Cinati was lost in thought, so did not at once put the question she would like to ask; but after a little she said: "Have you been here long?"

"Madame Cinati roused herself, and, drawing up an armchair close to Julia, said: "I am sure, child, that I have no knowledge of what has befallen you. I should like to know, but you are not strong yet, and I do not think that to appease my curiosity you should exert yourself unduly for the present. Enough to know, so far, that you have perfectly regained consciousness, and that you are not seriously ill."

"Yes, I am weak," sighed Julia, helplessly, "and I am so hungry.

"Have you eaten nothing to-day?"

"No, not since last night, at six o'clock."

"No breakfast, child! It is ten o'clock and after. What would you like?"

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"Oh, I don't know what—I feel all choked; so heavy in my chest—here—my lungs seem to be too big for the cavity," and she laid her hand upon her chest.

"Ah!" said Madame Cinati, thoughtfully, and she pressed her shapely lips so tightly that a small blue circle formed in their stead. Just then the concierge opened the door of the bedroom. "Please bring Mademoiselle Pembroke some breakfast, at once," said Madame Cinati.

"Indeed I will, and I want to do anything that I can do for Mademoiselle," replied the concierge.

Julia, who was looking at the grateful woman, saw tears gather in her eyes. She smiled and said: "Marguerite, I am better now; I shall soon be entirely well. I shall eat heartily—sure."

Then Madame Cinati gave a detailed order for the breakfast, and the concierge went out.

"Julia," began Madame Cinati, "have you been ill lately?"

"On the contrary, I have been unusually well."

"Then you have eaten something that has poisoned you. Have you dined out?"

"No, not out; only at my hotel."

"They sometimes serve cold duck there, and this often causes death, you know."

"Yes, I know it does," responded Julia; "but I ate no cold meat at all yesterday, nor last night. I went to Midnight Mass at the Madeleine. I felt well when I retired, and I knew nothing more until I was awakened by the sound of a harp—oh! it was so beautiful!"

A slight blush bepainted her cheeks, but Madame Cinati was too much interested to notice it.

"I went to the window; it was ajar. I was very dizzy and tried to steady myself as best I could, but I fell. Then I seemed sinking into a cloud, airy and light. After that I knew nothing until you waked me."

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Madame Cinati said nothing in reply; evidently she was thinking. She rose and left the boudoir, going into the bedroom. Julia was left alone. She could not think connectedly. Everything presented itself in an odd way.

Why was Madame Cinati here? Why had Madame Cinati waked her? Had she not been at the Midnight Mass? Had she not heard that beautiful "Mattinata" on the harp and violin? Maybe she had been dreaming? Maybe she was still in the dream? She put out her hand and touched the *salamandre*. She quickly withdrew her hand, for the stove was hot. No, she was awake, and all that had happened was true, and she was not on the cold stones of the Madeleine, thrilled by the voice of the only man she had ever loved. She blushed at the thought of her weakness, and let her head fall back into the depths of the billows of cushions around her.

Instinctively she tried to hide the rich blushes which chased one another all over her snow-white throat and whiter face, up to the border line at the top of the forehead, where they hid themselves among the mass of spun gold threads. They must have remained there for some time, hoping to scamper back over the ivory face and neck again, for Julia's face was a study in lights and shadows, such as any artist, even in the slightest advancement, would have painted: "A maiden busy with thoughts of her first, true love." And, too, he would have put there lights which flickered with the shadows of pain; for Julia felt keenly the bitter desolation she must face were she to continue deaf to the entreaties of Hampton Alverstone.

The door leading into the boudoir opened, and soon the tray of good things was set upon the little table first pushed up to the side of Julia. It was entirely covered with a snowy linen tray-cloth. Upon it were found

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Julia's silver spoons, knives and forks, her own dishes, which were of the most exquisite china—fragile and dainty to a fault—a silver pot of tea, hot and cold rolls, poached eggs, fresh, sweet butter, delicious grapes of the green variety, and some incredibly thin slices of hot toast—the toast in a silver toast dish and covered.

Julia looked at the tray, her eyes passing from one dish to another, while the concierge took off the cover from the toast.

"Give me toast first, please; it looks so good."

The concierge had brought Julia this kind of toast every morning, and Julia had once told her that she liked her toast very thin. She had not meant so thin as this, but it was always served delicately as if it were for a sick person instead of for a strong American girl, who studied all day and ate a hearty luncheon at twelve o'clock and a heartier dinner at six.

"You do not look happy, Marguerite," said Julia, addressing the concierge and breaking a slice of toast.

"No, I am not happy. I am happy that you are well and that I have the money for that Monsieur; but, Mademoiselle, I can not be happy until I know where my darling Pierre is. And, Mademoiselle, Pierre is not all. I must confess to you and to the Madame that I went to Mass last night and left mother to guard the door. She told me just now that while I was at Mass a lady came to the lodge door and asked for Miss Pembroke. Mother told her that you were at Mass. Then she asked mother if she might put a present she had for you into your room, and that she would return in the morning to see you. I would have told you last night when you entered if I had known it, but when I returned from Mass the entrance door was open a little, and mother was asleep, and now she tells me that she did not see the lady go out, and I suppose that the lady opened the door and

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went out herself, but did not shut the big door behind her."

All this the concierge said quickly and without pausing—spoke as one would have done at the confessional.

"Did she give no name—no card—no letter?" asked Julia.

"Yes, there is a card, and she told mother her name was Miss White. I am so sorry that mother let her into your apartment; but mother is from the country, Made-moiselle, and not used to city people. But," the concierge went on, regretfully, "I thought she could take my place for the time of the Midnight Mass, for then few go in or out through the doors."

Julia was astounded at the statements of the concierge, and clasped her hands quietly upon her lap, for at this moment the door of the bedroom opened and Madame Cinati came rushing into the room, evidently in a high state of excitement.

"Julia, do not be alarmed, for the danger is passed; but the odor from these roses is very nauseating, and, no doubt, it was these caused your illness."

In her hands Madame Cinati held the vase containing the roses, but she turned and went back into the bedroom, put down the vase, came out and shut the bedroom door.

"Where did you get those roses, Julia?"

"The roses I bought yesterday on Place de Wagram were small—I know nothing of those in my room."

"There are no other roses there, nothing but American Beauties, Julia," and Madame Cinati stood perplexed. "Julia, something is wrong with those roses."

The concierge was a woman of quite keen intelligence, and after the first shock of speechless horror which she experienced from the sight of the roses, which

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Julia avowed she had not bought, in fact, had no knowledge of, she instantaneously divined all.

"Oh! Madame! this is all my fault; do forgive me this once, and I'll never again leave my lodge."

Then she told Madame Cinati all she had told Julia about the midnight visitor to the apartment of Made-moiselle.

"I never knew a Miss White in America," said Julia, when the concierge had finished.

"Have you ever known any one by that name?" asked Madame Cinati.

"No, Madame Cinati; I have never known any person, man or woman, by the name of White."

"Strange; it savors of something irregular, and I think," said Madame Cinati, with darkening countenance, "that the police should be notified of the affair, just as it is—the mysterious roses—the disappearance of your roses—the American Beauties found in your room—their noxious odor—your stupor"—

"Oh! Madame! do forgive me! do not tell the police! Monsieur the proprietor will send me away. I know it was dreadfully careless! I beg of you, do not tell the police! Do not tell any one! I'll never do it again!"

Madame Cinati had quietly turned her eyes until they had rested upon the face of the concierge, then she carefully scrutinized every line and emotion expressed there.

"This woman is honest," she thought, "and not at all capable of complicity in a crime. It would be quite out of the question to consider her in the light of any sort of an accomplice, and it is quite unnecessary to cause her so much pain by giving publicity to the affair. There would be no use in trying to ferret out the evil-doer without police and detectives, and with them on the trail secrecy would be a thing not to be thought of."



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"Oh! Madame and Mademoiselle," exclaimed the concierge, in heartrending tones, "I pray you forgive me!" and, wringing her hands, she wailed softly, but most ruefully.

"I believe you are a good woman, and I feel certain you know nothing of the 'Miss White' who brought the roses—I feel certain it was these American Beauty roses she had in the pasteboard box. But you have been very indiscreet, to say the least—you must never again leave the lodge in care of any one."

Then tenderly caressing the hand of Julia, which she took between her own, she added: "You know that your carelessness almost caused the death of Miss Pembroke."

Julia smiled at Madame Cinati and then at the concierge, saying: "I shall soon be well and strong, but I will add an admonition to that of Madame Cintai," and, stretching out her free hand to the concierge, she went on, kindly however: "Never leave your lodge again in charge of any one. Let no one pass in or out without your knowledge."

The concierge knelt, and, touching Julia's hand reverently—reverently as if it had been the hand of the head of her church—vowed she would never again leave the lodge.

"Concierge, go and tell the doctor he is not needed now, for the young lady has recovered."

"I'll run at once."

"Here," said the prima donna, "before you go put those roses into a box and take them to a chemist—Monsieur Dekkah. Tell him that Madame Cinati thinks some deleterious substance has gotten into these flowers, and she wants to know what he finds. Don't speak of them being in Miss Pembroke's room." Then turning to Julia, the prima donna continued: "I can not fathom this mystery."

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"Nor I, either," said Julia: "I did not think it possible that any one in the world would do me harm."

"Well, my dear," said Madame Cinati, in a sad, serious voice, "it behooves you to be on guard in the future. Some one did the deed, and some one meant you harm. Now, whether that one will attempt the like again, I can not, of course, say; but it is more than likely that the one who had the daring to do this will have the daring to make other attempts. Julia, my dear child, be very cautious; your life here has been so sweet and so uneventful that you could be easily ensnared by persons bent on evil doing."

A short pause ensued, in which each was busy with her own thoughts, and it is safe to presume that the subjects of the reflections were the same.

"And you are going to America?" said Julia, breaking the silence.

"Yes, dear; La Provence leaves port at five this evening."

"America! America! America!" and Julia clapped her hands gleefully, and gazed over the high silver teapot on the tray—beyond the confines of her little boudoir—beyond the building—outside of Paris—beyond its walls—far across France—over the ocean—across the coast line—the Piedmont—in and out through pass after pass of the Appalachian mountain system, to the beautiful valley of the Ohio River—into the city of her birth—the city of her mother's tomb—and of all which to her was most sacred upon earth.

"You did not continue upon the tour you first planned," said Julia, laying aside her napkin.

"No, Julia; I canceled those engagements, for I prefer going to America, and the offer came only yesterday. It is a great treat to sing to American audiences. They are both perfectly appreciative and keenly critical."

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"What will you sing in New York?"

"I am to sing 'Traviata' at the Manhattan on New Year's eve."

"How I wish I could be there and hear you sing!"

"No, no, Julia; when you come to America it must be as the singer of the evening—the prima donna. Why, that is eleven!" exclaimed Madame Cinati. Then taking out her beautifully jeweled watch and comparing it with the little clock upon the mantel, she asked: "Is that the correct time?"

"Yes, it is," said Julia.

"Well, Julia, I think you are strong enough now to listen to the import of my visit."

"Yes, I feel perfectly recovered," said Julia; "please have no hesitancy in speaking to me upon whatever subject you wish to broach."

"I came in to see you on a little errand of business. In connection with my operatic work in New York I am to make some concert tours out to cities as far west as Chicago. During my stay in that city, with your permission, I shall send my secretary to confer with the lawyers who advertised for Miss Julia Pembroke to claim her fortune."

"My dear Madame Cinati, act in any capacity your judgment may suggest."

"Very well, then," said Madame Cinati, taking out a fountain pen from the depths of a gold-ring hand-bag, studded all over with many opals; also taking out a long sheet of legal paper bearing the stamp of France, such as that upon which all business transactions, legally recognized, must be written. "See, I am a real Portia, Julia." And she laughed that pretty soft ripple known to all her friends as the "laugh of liquid gold."

"Why!" laughed Julia in concert with Madame Cinati, who truly felt queer in this new capacity of scribe, for

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it was seldom indeed that she even held in her hand a pen for any purpose whatever; "why, Madame Cinati, what a picture you make!"

"Now, Julia, give me the names of any persons in America whom you would like me to see—the lawyers and so forth."

Julia gave her the name of the law firm, whose families in Chicago had attended the same church as herself, and with whom she had had a very favorable, though slight, acquaintance. "Bertram Pembroke was my father's name; Jane Hamley was my stepsister; Anna and Edith Pembroke were my half sisters."

"Your mother's name?"

"Cordelia Mertonby," Julia answered, gravely, for there came before her a vision of what life had been for her had her own dear mother, Cordelia Mertonby Pembroke, lived, to watch over and direct the ways and means by which her baby, Julia, was to reach the period which she had now reached.

Madame Cinati noticed the shade of gravity in the tone of Julia's voice, and quickly looked up, but Julia immediately possessed herself, and as quickly dismissed the emotion.

"Please, dear, how do you spell Mertonby?"

"M-e-r"—

"Ding!—ding!—ding!—sounded the outside bell sharply.

Julia made a movement to get up, but Madame Cinati objected: "No, Julia, do not attempt to rise. I will go."

Julia did not listen, but she could not help hearing the voices, as the two women neared the door of the boudoir, and she at once recognized Lady Trent.

Only twice or thrice could Julia hear the sweet, clear voice of Madame Cinati, for evidently Lady Trent was asking many questions.

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"Oh! my dear Julia!" exclaimed Lady Trent, on entering the room; "just as I feared. I thought you must be ill when you were not to be found in your place at Holy Trinity, particularly when I recalled that you had said you never absented yourself from morning service."

Julia smiled, saying: "I am not ill now, Lady Trent. See"—pointing to the breakfast tray—"I have eaten quite a breakfast—far more than any one could eat were he the slightest bit ill."

"Madame Cinati tells me it might have proved something serious."

Then Madame Cinati told all as it had occurred and transpired, even to her own suspicion that the flowers had caused the illness of Julia.

"Well! well!" mildly exclaimed Lady Trent, in a somewhat dazed manner, and as if trying to realize the meaning of all Madame Cinati had been telling her. She sat looking quietly at Julia and viewing the situation from all sides. What could it all mean? And who could have done it? How dangerous for a young girl alone in Paris! What if Madame Cinati had not found her! These were the many thoughts passing through Lady Trent's mind as the result of Madame Cinati's information.

Gathering a little energy, she asked:

"Where are the roses?"

"I gave directions to the concierge to ask a chemist to examine them and to report immediately as to the findings."

"But how could a stranger gain entrance to your room during your absence?"

"The old woman let her in," said Madame Cinati quickly, for she wished to prevent Julia's exerting herself to answer.

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"Is that old woman concierge for a building like this?"

"Ah! no! dear Lady Trent; the concierge, her daughter had gone to Midnight Mass"—

"Ah! I see," she interrupted, "and her old mother let in a stranger. How dangerous!" And Lady Trent shuddered at thought of the danger to which Julia was exposed with a concierge so unreliable as to the responsibility of her office as concierge.

"I regret much," said Madame Cinati, "to change so suddenly from this subject which interests me much, but I leave for New York at twelve."

"Why! Madame Cinati. Going to America?"

"Yes, Lady Trent; the train leaves at twelve forty-five. I am sorry to go while Julia is ill, but I must, or break my engagement."

"You birdies—you sing—you fly—and you sing and fly back," playfully remarked Lady Trent.

"Yes," said Julia; "she is going to my dear native land."

"I believe my little Julia is in danger of an attack of nostalgia," said Lady Trent, smiling inquiringly at Julia.

"Oh! no; I am content to stay in Paris, another year of study; but, really, I do wish I could go to America."

"Lady Trent," interrupted Madame Cinati, "may I ask you to pardon Julia and myself if we transact a bit of business just now?"

"Assuredly, my dear. Really, it is fully time that I go, or I shall be late at luncheon," said Lady Trent, in answer; and, rising quickly, she put out her hand and patted Julia tenderly, adding: "Don't have any cut flowers in your bedroom at any time. They throw off too much poisonous gas."

"Dear Lady Trent," said the prima donna, coming beside her and laying a dainty hand fondly upon her

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shoulder, "do be seated and remain. We shall finish in a very short time, for we were about through when you gave us the pleasure of this charming little visit."

"Ah! how prettily one can speak in French," replied Lady Trent; "I should love to be French when I wish to please."

"Do stay, Lady Trent," said Julia, "for I shall be alone in a few minutes, and quite likely I shall be a bit lonely. My mind may incline to follow Madame Cinati."

"Very well, Julia; I'll sit over here, out of all danger of naughtiness." And Lady Trent went to a seat by the window, through the curtains of which she could have quite a vista if she wished to look out; but she was never obliged to recreate in this way. She saw a score of "Faust"—for scores of many operas were plentiful in that apartment, and she picked it up and opened it.

Madame Cinati questioned Julia and wrote rapidly. After some time she said: "Now, Julia, let me read them over—father, Bertram Pembroke."

"Yes," answered Julia.

Though Lady Trent was not curious, she thought much of Julia; and, being a noblewoman by birth, was pleased with a lineage—the longer the better. Pembroke, that was a very good name—very English.

"Your mother's name?"—

"Mertonby," replied Julia.

"Beg pardon, my dear; but did I understand you to say your mother's name was Mertonby?"

"Yes, Lady Trent, that was her name," and Julia experienced no little perturbation of spirits, for Lady Trent's manner had struck Julia a little unfavorably; so she added: "That was my grandfather's name."

"Mertonby! your grandfather's name!" ejaculated Lady Trent, rising and going toward Julia. "He was an Englishman?" continued Lady Trent, with an inflec-

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tion which showed that she expected an answer in the affirmative.

"Yes, he was an Englishman by birth, but after his marriage, in Europe, he made his home in Cincinnati, where he lived during his married life. There he died and there he sleeps, in the cemetery on the banks of the beautiful Ohio River—he sleeps between dear grandma and my young mother."

The tears would trickle, though Julia strove bravely to restrain them. Madame Cinati would leave in a few minutes, and Julia, strong as was her wont, gently, tenderly, lovingly pushed aside those blessed memories and turned her mind to scenes of a brighter hue.

"Whom did your grandfather marry? At least, was she English?"

"No, Lady Trent; she was not English," replied Julia; she was Christine Upsalen, of Sweden, and he was an Englishman of nobility."

Lady Trent leaned forward, and, laying a hand on either of Julia's shoulders, cried out delightedly: "Julia Pembroke, you are the rightful heir—you are the Marchioness of Essexby, and I am the usurper. Do you understand? My father was the young brother of your grandfather. Your mother was my first cousin. I always felt peculiarly drawn toward you, and I am sure that Reginald felt somewhat as I did, and you and he are second cousins"—Lady Trent seemed trying to realize that the affair was not a passing dream, which would brush away easily in a moment of time.

Then, gently shaking Julia, she said: "I must try to wake up, for truly I can not realize this happy truth. How surprised they will all be when I introduce you at Court, for you must go home with me at once."

"Now, my dear friends of one family," said Madame Cinati, overflowing in ripples of dainty laughter, "I must



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leave this delightful company, which I hope to rejoin soon, for I have one more call to make, and then I go to the station."

"Dear Madame Cinati, I shall be at the St. Lazare to see your train depart, and to send you off with a sincere blessing." And Julia's voice was not minus a suspicion of emotion within.

"Thank you, my pretty one; I leave you with a much lighter heart than I had thought possible when I saw your feeble condition this morning. Now Lady Trent will take care of her own little lamb—one of her own flock." And she stooped and kissed Julia's forehead several times. Julia returned the tender of affection by taking both of Madame Cinati's hands in hers and kissing them over and over, looking up into the face of the great prima donna with tenderest love beaming from every line of her countenance—yes, more than love was written there—it partook of the nature of worship, and well it might, for the student life of Julia Pembroke had been made roseate by the noble generosity of the great prima donna—Madame Cinati—the lyric diva, who had been honored with every decoration bestowed upon a world's songstress. Julia could never forget that hour in Madame Cinati's room at the hotel in Chicago, when she had introduced herself to the Madame, and she would ever remain grateful to the great prima donna.

"I think, dear," said Madame Cinati, who still stood before Julia, in whose clasp were held the hands of her adored sovereign, "you would better remain quiet; at least not subject yourself to the exertion of going to the train. Lady Trent, your new mama, will tell you what is best for you."

"Yes, I shall be happy to do so. I shall take especially good care of Julia. She must come and live with us."

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"Good-bye, then, Julia."

"Good-bye," said Julia; and, rising from her chair for the first time that morning, she threw her arms around the singer and said: "Good-bye, my darling friend; God go with you and protect you."

"Thank you, sweet child. I wish you happiness, health and safety."

"But I must be at the train. This good-bye can not do," exclaimed Julia, excitedly.

Madame Cinati went off, saying: "As you will, dear one."

After Madame Cinati had left, Julia, feeling herself quite recovered, though not perfectly strong, had decided to go to the station to bid her a last adieu. So, not long after, acting on this decision, Lady Trent and Julia left the apartment and went down the winding staircase together. At the vestibule door Julia caught sight of the handsome Mercédès standing in front of the door. She also saw the man in the front seat, and thought nothing more than that he was chauffeur; but when she reached the entrance and the man alighted to open the door of the automobile, she saw it was Lieutenant Trent. He had on an immense coat of fine stuff—black and of an emulative quality. The cuffs and collar were seal, and the turned-up collar just came above his ears, and partly hid the cheeks and entirely covered the fine combative line of the jaw.

Julia had not yet seen him in this cloak, but mentally she pronounced him very handsome. Julia put out her hand, and, with an appreciative smile, greeted him with: "Merry Christmas, Reginald. You look very handsome in this great coat and cap."

Trent, though a soldier of great fortitude, stood amazed at the familiarity of the young lady, for whom he had been cherishing a very ardent affection, and who

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on former occasions had always had such an exquisitely delicate reticence of manner.

He smiled and held open the door, but could not at once answer this Miss Pembroke, with the free, open manner. He had thought of her in a relation dearer than that of mother, but now he was undecided, for the wife of Lieutenant Trent must be a lady—one for whom he would never need to blush. He felt certain she would not please his mother now, but he had noticed an odd half smile flit across the face of his mother when Miss Pembroke had accosted him.

As they sped off toward the depot, Lady Trent leaned forward and said something to her son. He turned suddenly and looked at Julia with a strange, eager expression, which an observer would have interpreted as an interrogation requiring an answer, in compliance with the wishes of Trent, listening the while to his mother, who still related something of a surprising nature. When the motor car reached Rue d'Amsterdam, the street was congested and looked like the swollen tributary of a great river. Many, many people crowded and jostled one another on the sidewalks. The cobbled street was swarming with vehicles of all descriptions, and so dense was the throng that every now and then the lines of carriages ascending and descending the narrow way were halted.

It was then that some of the pedestrians, wishing to cross to the other side of the street, seeing the halt of carriages, would edge and wind their way through the waiting vehicles, but often, before they could succeed in reaching the opposite curbing, the line of carriages would begin to move, and they would find themselves in very great danger of having their feet run over or of being thrown to the ground.

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Trent began to wish he had come by the Rue de Londres, but as he could not turn around, there was nothing to do but to wait.

A wagon that had been standing near the curb, and which belonged to a carter, moved on. Trent, seeing the open space, turned the car to follow the carter, but almost instantly he was forced to back, for the motor car was too large to follow in the wake of the wagon.

"Stop! stop the automobile!" It was Julia's voice.

Trent looked around, and saw that one more revolution of the wheel and he would run over and most likely kill a small, ragged creature, with a very sad face. She was a young girl—some fourteen years—with an unearthly pallor, and so frightened that she appeared unable to move her meager little body, and stood just in the wheel track, panting and with dilated eyes, like a trapped fawn.

"Step out," said Julia, kindly; "step out and go back to the sidewalk. We shall not move until you are safe."

The little girl was French, and, smiling at Julia, who had addressed her in her own pretty language, obeyed.

"You have excellent presence of mind," said Lady Trent. "Such women become heroines in times of peril, when immediate action is required."

Trent stopped at the end of the covered way, and, assisting the ladies out of the motor car, the three went toward the gate, after Trent had given an old man a franc if he would guard his automobile.

The last shrill whistle was sounding. The train jerked—moved—stopped—jerked again—the screeching of the whistle growing louder and more vigorous all the while. On all sides was commotion, for it was a critical moment, as well for those a moment too late as for those in charge of the going out of the great liner, those to whom the throng trusted for safety.

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Then the train moved on slowly. And the little party, rushing through the gate, saw the uselessness of further effort to reach the coach, at the window of which the prima donna, Madame Cinati, was seen by her friends. Trent lifted his cap and stood bent forward in an attitude of great respect, while Lady Trent and Julia waved good-bye.

It was a pretty sight, that little group, to Madame Cinati, at the window, from which she continued looking and throwing kisses, until she could see it no more. Julia thought of America as she watched the train disappearing, then tried to think how much she loved France, but she was born of blood that had been patriotically true to America, and, naturally, she herself was as patriotic.

In the Route de la Muette, a rider, in the full comparison of the fashionable riding world, was walking his horse, a beautiful jet-black steed, with a neck like a ready bow; a long, silky mane, like thick spun floss, which almost covered one side of his shapely neck; a tail that formed like a fan, just swept above the line of the small ankle—he was a thoroughbred, from the quivering nostrils and the narrow, pointed ears, to the small, polished hoofs. He was proud of himself, but prouder by far of his rider, for a horse knows whether the one seated in the saddle is an equestrian or not; and, too, he was the petted animal of the rider, and his attachment for his master was a something of human devotion. The rider was Alverstone.

He did not look happy, and it seemed probable that he had not enjoyed the beautiful Christmas day, when all the Christian world should be happy; at least, moved by a degree of gratitude for the faith in Christ. Many passers, noticing the extraordinary care with which his

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horse was groomed, remarked the sad countenance of the rider, and wondered aimlessly about this stranger, until some novelty in the way of another passer-by carried the mind off into another channel. The naked aspect of the branches upon the trees gave a strange, weird tone to the æolian music sung through the Bois on that especial Christmas noontide, and awakened in the mind of a thoughtful person like Alverstone feelings of sadness, as his mind took on an historic coloring; and he saw in fancy the world of those whose lives had been lost in that great woods once infested by bands of robbers, but which was now beautifully arranged for purposes of a world-renowned park, and decorated with touches of the highest specimen of the art of landscape gardening. Out of the soft, rich soil the grass grew, and where the damp moss of a past summer had dried up and grown dull, the dark green trunks of massive forest trees rose gloomy in their sturdy stateliness.

Alverstone thought, in a sort of melancholy mood, that the dreadful howlings of the wind through the branches of these great monitors of past ages might be the wailings of the spirits, suddenly and prematurely thrust out of the body and left there to wail and so wail on to infinity.

With his mind darkened by such coloring, a magnificent Mercédès swept across the wide *allée* in front of him. They did not see him, but he saw them, and they were not going so fast that he could not see that Julia was leaning over the front seat, talking in an eagerly excited manner to the chauffeur, whom Alverstone at once recognized as Trent, though he had never seen him so attired. Julia was speaking with a familiarity altogether unbecoming, and only last night, in the Madeleine, she had told him that she would marry him if she ever married any one, but that she was married to her art. Really,

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he was not quite sure that he cared to marry a woman who would be so free with men not allied by ties of blood. No, his wife must not be of that class of women. All the women of his large connection in America were women of pure, unsullied characters, and, like Cæsar's wife, above suspicion; but a young woman, riding out alone with a man whom she had known but a few days, and chatting most familiarly with him, could not, to his mind, rank sufficiently high to suit his ideals—and yet—his head throbbed, for he had really worshiped at the feet of this young American—this Julia — Pemb—b—he caught his breath; it was a great shock to his nice sense of propriety. How could it be, that she, by whom he had sat only last night—less than twelve hours ago—she for whom he had declared undying love, should now be out with another man, and to all appearances truly enjoying life with him, for she was talking in a most vivacious manner. Jealousy blinded the eyes of his soul—his being—his all, so that he saw only Julia and Trent. He had not seen the person of Lady Trent, wrapped in her dark furs and sitting close in the corner of the motor car, next to himself. No, he had seen only Trent and Julia and their happiness with each other. She had not even responded to his serenade of last night. That of itself had hurt him, for he saw no reason why she could not signify her appreciation; but now he understood all; she did not wish to do so, certainly not.

His pulse seemed ceasing to beat, for his heart was pausing in its work—life threatened to leave him—he gasped: "Ah, Shakespeare knew the heart of woman, when he said: 'Frailty, thy name is woman.'"

## CHAPTER XVII.

To Julia Pembroke the day was not what, to her notion, was a pretty Christmas day, for in America, in her home at Cincinnati, she had remembered Christmas days when the sun was shining in resplendent glory from the depths of a blue of deepest azure, not in the least marred by clouds of any size; and she remembered how crisp the air had been, and how she had stepped from a warm, comfortable home, into the beautiful sleigh, drawn by the spirited horses, that dashed along as if glad to hear the ringing of the joyous bells hung in strands around their graceful necks and shapely bodies—she had remembered all this, and more, too—but she would not linger on the scene now, for it was framed in loving remembrance, and it might make her sad in the retrospect. Yet, oh! what a Christmas is had in that far-away land of the North Central States of America! she thought, exclamatorily.

Julia was grateful for all she chose to call “blessings,” and especially was she glad upon this day to know that she and Lady Trent were near of kin, and in their fine English hospitality they had come and taken her an exhilarating ride in a perfectly new Mercédès, and that, too, all along the great pleasure drives of the Bois, all over the avenues and the great boulevards of Paris.

The rain was not then falling, but it threatened, as it does in Paris at this season of the year, when it does not actually pour. It was only two o'clock, and there was time enough yet for a mist—a drizzle—and then a shower, settling into a steady rain.



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In the absence of Madame Cinati her carriage was at the disposal of Julia. And she had telephoned for it to be at her place by two of the afternoon, and now, at the specified time, she had given the order for a drive to Maestro Novara's. The magnificent turn-out of the prima donna was known to all who knew her, for no handsomer pair of Arabian steeds was ever seen prancing along the driveways, daintily pawing the air, as if moving in play instead of in the discharge of a duty, and that often under the cut of the fierce lash. As they dashed gaily around the Place de l'Etoile, the sun came out and lit up the scene, which was one of great interest to any person of a reflective turn of mind. It seemed that a large part of Paris was out on its holiday jaunt, for the twelve avenues leading up to Napoleon's Triumphal Arch were streams of rushing automobiles and carriages, coming up on the Place de l'Etoile by one avenue and disappearing by some other.

And, too, the sidewalks were thronged with pedestrians—many Parisians out for their daily promenade, but many more from the country and its cities and towns, for at this season of the year great crowds from outside of Paris come in to see the great city—beautiful, fascinating, all-absorbing Paris—Paris, which is that place next to his own, if not equal to or before his own place, for every one who goes there.

Sad to say, however, one cloud of inky blackness marred this otherwise beautiful sight, and no slight effort on the part of every humane person is required to keep his mind in the joyous mood of Merry Christmas; for on all sides is to be seen the entire body of a young or an old beggar, when that beggar is not a fractional human being, with just the infinitesimal portion of a human organization, that makes for the balance of life. Some of these poor bits of humanity—perhaps only the trunk, the

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head and the arm or arms—are given locomotion by means of the little express wagon, moved by their skeleton arms, and whether in summer or in winter, in rain or in shine, one is met by the upturned face of the little sufferer—a face in which is registered untold agony, not only from the amputated limbs or other deformities, but from the suffering entailed upon the pain-racked remnant of an organism by its efforts at locomotion. That he enjoys the open air and the freedom is belied in the anguish of the little face of unearthly pallor.

Though the threatened rain had not yet descended, the sun now wore a very heavy gray veil, so that no one could see his form, let alone his smile. The Parisian knows better than to look for his beaming countenance for long at a time during this season of the year, so he is condemned as a capricious fellow.

Julia felt for the Venetian vase. It was at her side and safe. Next she felt the little box in her muff of royal ermine and it was safe.

"Ah!" she thought; "it was very charming of Madame Nitolsk to wish to remember me with this beautiful Christmas gift, but her notions of the value of a gift, no doubt, are in keeping with the great wealth with which she has always been surrounded."

Julia Pembroke had good blood, and could not violate her conscience in accepting a gift whose value might be disproportionate with the relation existing between the giver and the object of the kind remembrance.

"No," she said; "it is beyond me to accept it."

Here, jarring over a rough spot in the avenue, the Teddy bear, which she had as a Christmas gift for some one, fell off the seat. She leaned forward and picked it up, putting it in its place on the seat before her. Her face flushed as she leaned forward. "What a strange sensation for me!" she thought, for it had taken the hot

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flush some time to subside. Then the face was cool beyond its wont.

"How strange!" again she thought; "this is, no doubt, the result of my illness last night. Now that is strangest of all—Miss White—an American—a box of roses—a card and a woman wearing a large cloak. Well, we may yet know all pertaining to the affair, and I am quite sure that the business manager of Madame Cinati will learn all there is to know of Miss White, her roses and her mission."

And she looked out between the little silk curtains across the window, for she had partly drawn them to hide, if possible, from the importunities with which the beggars would always follow her, whether she went on foot, in a cab or in the magnificent carriage of Madame Cinati, proving beyond question the certainty with which these beggars can distinguish the sympathetic from the unsympathetic face.

Just as Julia looked out at the window her eyes fell upon a beautiful jet black charger, ridden by a very stylish young man. Julia knew it was one for whom she should have a happy smile of welcome and good will, and was about to let him know that such was her predominating emotions, when a glint of recognition shot through his eye, but instantly it vanished into a look of vague consciousness, which became a general view of the equipage, and he turned his head slowly and nonchalantly in the opposite direction.

Julia was astonished, amazed, dumbfounded by turns. Her eyes dilated and her breath came hard.

Could it be that he only saw a woman, but did not recognize it was she! she with whom a few short hours before he had pleaded for the right to call her his bride! —his wife! They had parted the best of friends! He had— Oh, pshaw! she would not think of Hampton

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Alverstone in so unkind a manner. He had not known her when he looked at the carriage. She put up her hand and pushed back the delicate silk curtain playfully, saying lightly: "You little naughtiness, you are to blame for this; you kept my lover"—

She started and clapped her hand tightly across her mouth, looking around as though she expected to hear some one comment accordingly upon the vacillating character of woman. Then she colored her thought with a shade of blue, and the warm glowing rose of the morning tint gave place to that of sombre blue, seen in the approaching April shower—for love, true love, has all the seasonal changes before it arrives at the highest development of its entire love year.

But suppose he had known her; that would have been an odd way to meet her, after such an hour as they had spent together in the Madeleine. If he could be governed by moods such as that, she was better off without him, she thought; at least, she was quite sure that she did not care for him.

She was now nearing the master's, and she must think on pleasanter things. The dear old Signor Novara and his charming wife, Signora Novara, would be glad to see her, and their happy Christmas greeting she heard before she entered. Both would seize her hands—one on either side—as soon as the old butler should have shown her into the grand *salon*. They would lead her to a sofa, and the three would sit upon it together while exchanging the good wishes—the compliments of the season—there were no presents exchanged at this time. Julia respected the foreign notion of the maestro and his household, and on New Year's morning she called and left the gold coin in the butler's hand as she passed in through the door, which for the entire year just ended he had very politely opened at her ring and opened again

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at her departure, and he was always pleased with her little remembrance.

Then she would exchange the New Year's presents with the Signor and the Signora Novara.

She stepped from the carriage, and while doing so gave orders to the footman to wait.

Just then a cheery voice rang out from a little distance:

"Good afternoon, cousin Julia."

"Ah! cousin Reginald," exclaimed Julia.

"You are not taking a lesson to-day, I hope."

"Oh, no; just going to pay my respects to Signor and Signora Novara."

"You are to be with us this evening, for we must join hands around the family board on this first Christmas of our newly found relationship."

"I should like to, cousin Reginald, but I can not."

"Oh, now you can," and Trent stepped closer to her, saying on: "I must have you there, and I must hear our American nightingale sing—sing some little song, if the master will not permit of an aria."

Julia prettily put up her hand, as if waving him back, at the same time saying, in her happiest manner: "I pray you, cousin Reginald, desist—desist."

Just then the jet-black charger and his rider came into view at the end of the short street, and this time Julia looked into the face of Hampton Alverstone, with the difference that this time she knew that he had both seen and had known it was she who stood facing him; and, too, he must have known that it was Trent with whom she was speaking, for Trent was in the full dress of his rank, and very easily recognizable by a friend, even though only his back might be toward that friend.

It would have been perfectly proper for Alverstone to have spoken to Julia at the distance of the corner,

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but he did not. He only looked at her, and as quickly away again; but Julia had thought there had been reproach in the look, and this she had bitterly resented by raising her voice above her usual pitch and saying: "Thank you, thank you, Reginald; I shall dine with you at six-thirty this evening."

As she finished speaking a great clatter of horse's hoofs behind Trent made him turn, and he had just time to see Alverstone disappearing, for he had only been crossing the short street; yet Trent had seen enough to understand why Julia's face had paled, while Julia's eyes had flashed defiantly, and why the horse's hoofs had made so much noise. But he had no time to say anything, for Julia had said good-bye, and he had only time to do his duty in reply to her word of parting.

Trent went off toward the boulevard. He was very proud of his nice cousin—very, very proud, and he thought how happy he should be to introduce her to his brother officers and their ladies. True, he had made love to her, but she had not cared for it; in fact, she had treated it as she might the words of a loving appreciation from the lips of one of her own sex. It had ended in the same way in which such girlish avowals always do end—in friendly intercourse—in warm appreciation, each of the other, whenever they met; and now that the relationship between himself and Julia was near, he was certain that they would never contract a marriage.

The Trents were a strong-minded family, and a marriage within the bounds of consanguinity would never for a moment be countenanced by the Trents. Nowhere back along the splendid line had there been registered a wreck of humanity nor any approach to it, through the medium of degenerate blood, and Trent told himself that, knowing this, he would not be the wayward one to introduce a new graft upon the dear, old family tree.

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He concluded with the thought that Alverstone was certainly very much in love with his cousin Julia, and he was not sorry, for he really liked the American traveler and financier, and he thought the two were peculiarly suited by nature, one for the other. Alverstone was the dark type of man, and Julia was the fair type of woman. He smiled at the picture of the handsome pair.

And this dear friend of his showed by his impatient irritability of this afternoon, that he was not a little, but quite jealous of Reginald Trent, he thought. Then he thought again, perhaps he had had a right before now; but of this he would disabuse the mind of Alverstone at the earliest opportunity.

Some twenty minutes after Julia and Trent had parted, Julia came out of the Maestro Novara's door, but she was not alone.

"Ah! is this your carriage?" said Madame Nitolsk, for it was she who accompanied Julia. The footman opened the door immediately on seeing Miss Pembroke.

"Will you not have a seat with me?" she asked, at the same time putting out her left hand and turning Madame Nitolsk toward the carriage, as if to urge her invitation.

"Thank you, Miss Pembroke; it is a delight, I assure you."

They got in and the carriage went off toward the boulevard, but it did not return to the Arc de Triomphe, for before entering the carriage Julia had given the number of Madame Nitolsk's residence, on the Rue Caumartin, and so the horses went in the direction of the Opéra.

"Do tell, Miss Pembroke; what are you doing with this?" She had picked up the Teddy bear and was looking from it to Julia, for she had supposed that she knew

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Julia better than she did; if Julia were given to indulging in the new fad—carrying around artificial animals. Julia smiled and replied with the question: "Is he not pretty?"

"Yes, but"—

"No," interrupted Julia; "he is not an interloper in society. He is doing a real work in life. Wait, I'll tell you his mission later."

"He has a nice glossy coat," said Madame Nitolsk, and, after another moment's examination, she added: "Excuse me, I must laugh, for his nose reminds me of Monsieur Nevere; but I am in a state of high tension to-day," she continued, "and I laugh easily."

She affected this frivolous manner only to hide the real condition of herself. Her life had been spent in the management of what she was pleased to term "My men," and any man who had found himself in their home—the home of Banker Nitolsk—either through the influence of the splendid man whose lawful wife she had succeeded in becoming, or for diplomatic reasons, if at all susceptible to her influence, was included under that head. She had tried to play with them as though they had been the titular dignitaries of the chessboard, whenever it suited her purpose to do so, and often she had been led by this purpose.

Hampton Alverstone had been one whom she had accounted refractory, and she had really given him a warmer regard than she had ever given others—and especially had she been given to this since the death of her husband. She loved him, she told herself, and she would allow him to love no other woman—not for long, at any rate. This was her disease, and she had the remedy.

On this particular afternoon, when Madame Nitolsk had seen Julia Pembroke enter the grand *salon* of Signor Novara, she had tried to make her way to Julia at once.



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But Julia being acquainted with many people congregated in the *salons*, she was detained in her intentions. Thus it was that not until Julia Pembroke was again with the maestro and his wife, saying good day, that Madame Nitolsk learned of the illness of Miss Pembroke during the night just passed. The news had gone like chaff before wind among the many groups, but each informed partly grasped or distorted the real truth, until many rumors reached the ear of Madame Nitolsk. She was excited, being very much interested in the young American singer, as she pettingly called Julia, and determined to learn the particulars; so when Julia left the *salon* Madame Nitolsk joined her in the great corridor. During the ride home, in answer to showers of questions put by Madame Nitolsk, Julia had told of her attendance at the Midnight Mass; of the concierge and her grief over the lost francs, and the nonappearance of her son; of the serenade, the stupor—the all.

"Open window! How can a singer sleep with an open window in this climate?"

"I do not," replied Julia; "but I failed to lock the casement window before going to the Madeleine."

"Ah!" said Madame Nitolsk, with eyeballs dilated, to the verge of bursting. "Ah! I see! I see!"

Julia shuddered, not at the sight Madame Nitolsk presented, in her genuine stare of surprise, but in the thought of the premature death which she had suffered had that window been firmly closed; for to her there was great joy in living—her delight in life was a perpetual praise to her Creator, and death at her age was fraught with only unmixed horror.

After a moment's silence—for, in fancy, she was where she thought she would have been had she died on this Christmas morning—"I wonder if roses ever do emit a poisonous substance?"

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"Oh! I think not," said Madame Nitolsk; "at least, not the cultivated rose." Then her voice became even more serious than it had been, and she asked: "To what pharmacy did Madame Cinati send the roses, may I ask?"

"I do not know exactly," replied Julia.

"Do you know in what quarter of Paris?"

"No, I do not. I seldom go to drug stores of any description."

"You did not even hear her mention the name of the chemist who was to examine them?"

"No—yes, I believe it was something like Aldek—the son of the concierge is a clerk for this same chemist, and the concierge took the flowers there, I think, but I am not quite sure."

"Oh! oh! oh!" ejaculated Madame Nitolsk. "How could any one be so wicked as to send you poisoned flowers!"

"Well," said Julia, "we do not know that the flowers were poisoned, but Madame Cinati said they had a very noxious odor, and she wished the chemist to examine them. My illness might have been caused by something else than the odor from the flowers—I may have eaten something indigestible."

Madame Nitolsk drew a deep breath—one would have pronounced it a breath of relief. Julia remarked the sigh, and, putting her hand on that of Madame Nitolsk, said: "We shall spend the rest of the time in speaking of Christmas joys, and not in the mention of this unpleasant affair."

"Oh! but to think of any one so wicked as to harm an innocent, earnest, plodding student, like you. You have some very bitter enemy in the world of your song, no doubt."

"I know of none," said Julia; "but let it pass now."

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"But, really, it is all so horrible that I can not speak of anything else," said Madame Nitolsk, and she put up her kerchief as if to shut out the horror of it.

After a little she leaned back in the deep seat, and the marked brows were very level, and the round places on either side of the pointed chin were rounder than they had been, though under all this exterior of severe decision was an easiness of manner and a calmness of expression.

"You must not let the perpetrator go unpunished—you must not—you must find her."

Had Julia looked, she would have read that a settled determination had fixed itself within the brain of Madame Nitolsk.

"Fortunate for you," she went on, without giving Julia time to reply, "that you have such a friend as Madame Cinati. But," she added, and her inflection formed a question, "I thought she was in Vienna."

"She was, but she returned to Paris, to go to America—to New York."

"Well," mused Madame Nitolsk, "she is truly a lovely woman. And you use these beautiful horses whenever you choose?" she added, quizzingly.

"Yes, I can 'phone for the horses whenever I wish to use them, but I often use the ordinary cabs."

"I pronounce you very fortunate, indeed," said Madame Nitolsk. "Now, in the absence of your very kind friend, Madame Cinati, do allow me to be a little bit your good friend; for, dear Miss Pembroke, I love you, both for your own dear self and for the sake of my child, Adino, who loves you, and calls you 'The Angel.' You will make us so verry happy if you come and dine with us at six this evening. Will you accept this very informal invitation?"

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"I thank you very much, indeed, and, were I at liberty, I should certainly avail myself of the pleasurable hour, but I dine with the Trents this evening."

Ah! Lieutenant Trent and Hampton Alverstone, by your acquaintance with the woman—Madame Nitolsk—through your carelessness in not keeping to her place a woman of Madame Nitolsk's character—you paved the way for her intimate association with the noble American girl, whom it was your duty to shield, instead.

"Dine at the Trents another evening," said Madame Nitolsk, stiffly.

"Oh!" quickly replied Julia, for she understood that Madame Nitolsk was hurt, thinking, no doubt, that she had been slighted. "There will be no guest but me."

"Indeed!" again exclaimed Madame Nitolsk. "When do you go there? Perhaps you can dine with me first."

"No, I dine at the Trents, at six-thirty."

"Well, then, you could not, of course," replied Madame Nitolsk, slowly, and evidently thinking deep, deep thoughts.

Julia looked at her and then seemed to draw back, as if retreating within herself.

Madame Nitolsk saw it all and tried to be pleasant.

"You may go off to India, as the wife of the gay Lieutenant," she said, laughing lightly.

Julia retreated farther within herself at the hard rasp in the tone of the widow's voice, but she made no answer to Madame Nitolsk, for she started at the sound of an inner voice, which seemed to say, in tones of her grandmother—in the long ago—"Be wise as serpents and harmless as doves." What was that? And why had this admonition come just then—just at this moment! Perhaps, when the mists are rolled away, Julia will know that unseen spirits whispered the warning, and that un-

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seen spirits whisper a warning at every fatal moment, and that the reason one ever fails of preservation from evil influence is only that one fails to hear—at least to obey—the tintinnabulations borne in upon one's inner self. And this obedience makes the difference between the one who treads intricate and dangerous passages and that other one, who is foiled, if not lost, at every turn.

Julia laid her hands, one upon another, upon her muff and was very still for a little time: Madame Nitolsk sat looking at her, but Julia was all unconscious of the attentions the widow was then giving her—Madame Nitolsk, who, were she in an Irish setting, might pass for an Irish-American or a child of the Emerald Isle; Madame Nitolsk, who, were she in a Spanish setting, by the brightening of her large, black eyes, could easily pass for a South American, or a daughter of the Spanish Peninsula; Madame Nitolsk, who, in her vivacious moments, by adding a touch of timidity, was a real French beauty; and when the dreamy and languorous effects pervaded not only the eye but the body of Madame Nitolsk, she could easily pass for a woman of the Orient, but in this last setting Julia Pembroke had never seen her—if she had, she would not at this moment have been speeding down Boulevard Haussmann in company with this Madame Nitolsk.

After sitting in silence for a little time, Madame Nitolsk said, coaxingly, as she laid her left hand on top of Julia's, which were clasped upon her muff: "Do send the Trents regrets and dine with me. Their home is gay, bright, happy; and mine—is so sad—so desolate—so lonely—after the destruction of our family fireside. Won't you, dearest Julia, come with me? Adinino, my baby, would be so glad to see you—his Christmas dinner would be one he should remember, I know."

"I am sorry, but I can not," said Julia, sadly.

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"Is that your final?"

"I am sure I have no plausible excuse to offer the Trents."

Madame Nitolsk was angered in her disappointment, but beyond a slight piquancy of manner, not for an instant did she forget herself.

"I thought it a rule of the master that his pupils should not be in society," Madame Nitolsk said, almost petulantly.

"I have had little of society," said Julia, "and I should not go to the Trents were it not that I go informally, for we are especially good friends."

Madame Nitolsk now turned her eyes out upon the street, for she felt that Julia must be higher in the regard of Lieutenant Trent than she was; and, though she cared nothing for him, except for the use she might make of him, she yet jealously guarded the seat of honor in his regard.

There was a lull in the conversation, and neither moved to break the silence. Suddenly Madame Nitolsk, turning her head away from the window and looking ahead of her at the prancing horses, said: "What a perfect livery Madame Cinati has! Does she keep these beautiful horses at the stables?"

"Oh, no; she has them kept in her own court-yard. Everything belonging to Madame Cinati lives in and around the court—servants—all."

"Ah! secure as are mine, then."

"Yes, just the same, I should judge," replied Julia.

"Beautiful! beautiful!" musingly repeated Madame Nitolsk, as she continued to look through the front window at the objects of her interest. "But"—she turned and looked at Julia, and her face was very earnest—"I believe you do not know that these horses are very delicate—very sensitive. I am not a horsewoman, but," she

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went on in an explanatory manner, "I know something of horses, and I would not take these out when the night is bad."

"Oh! I never do take them out when the night is bad, even threatening; but when the weather is like this I have no fear for them."

Madame Nitolsk looked quickly at Julia, but she offered no comment to the words, spoken in decided tones. Then she lowered her gaze, and the dark crescents, which fell on the deep olive of the smooth cheeks, were the only shadows on the perfect face.

Here Julia brought out the present, hidden away in the folds of tissue paper within her muff, saying: "Madame Nitolsk, you will forgive me, I know. I must ask you to bear with me, for I can not accept so costly a gift as this." She passed the case to Madame Nitolsk, who took it without protest, and then said:

"I respect your convictions upon such matters; perhaps it was more costly than need be; but I must make you some little gift on this beautiful Christmas day, if only for the gratitude I feel for the delight your charming personality affords me. You do not know the loneliness of my life, Miss Pembroke. Really, I have always had a sad, isolated life. True, our home in Calcutta was always thronged with guests, but I was as much alone in that crowd as if I had been alone in Siberian wastes."

She succeeded in communicating the expressed sentiment as the real condition of Madame Nitolsk, so that, when unclasping a bracelet from around her shapely wrist, she held it out to Julia, saying: "Come! as true friends you will not refuse. It is not much, but it is mine, and when you see it you can know that it belonged to a woman who disbelieved in her kind until she met you. Ah! Julia—I mean Miss Pembroke—you do

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not know how much you have been to me. Come, you will not refuse this little bracelet." Julia acquiesced, without the slightest protestation, and put out her arm to Madame Nitolsk, who clasped the jeweled band around her wrist, saying:

"In the devotion of true friendship."

She uttered the words slowly, and they were very impressive. Though the bracelet consisted of only five very delicate threads of Roman gold, they were held in place by five jeweled bars, each bar filled with tiny diamonds and rubies—the finest stones. Altogether it was a very costly present, and not at all such a one as Julia thought it to be.

She seemed mystified with the words of Madame Nitolsk, else, she thought, that since she had refused the beautiful necklace for reasons of value, the bracelet must be comparatively inexpensive.

As the carriage stopped in front of Madame Nitolsk's home, Julia said:

"This is for Madame Nitolsk," and she handed her the antique Venetian vase; "and this is for my dear little friend Adino," and she smiled and put the Teddy bear toward Madame Nitolsk.

She accepted both the presents, and, with as gracious ceremony as if she prized them beyond all other gifts she had ever known, and this she would have done had she been a real woman and capable of understanding the heart value which a Christmas gift should carry.

Madame Nitolsk took out her kerchief and raised it to her eyes, while she said, in a tremulous voice: "You are a dear, good girl. I love you."

Then she lifted Julia's hand to her lips and kissed it, and stepped down and away from the carriage, across the sidewalk into her home.

There, where was elegance most palatial.



## CHAPTER XVIII.

A priest, vested with the long, close-fitting ecclesiastical habit of his order, sat writing at a clumsy, unpainted wooden table in a small room. The ceiling was high and vaulted. The uncovered gray stone wall and floor were dark with moisture. A small wooden chair, the table at which the priest wrote, two beds, though without mattresses, and which, in reality, were simply benches (some old woolen robes serving as pillows and coverings) composed the scanty furnishings of the room. In a niche in the wall hung a crucifix, and beside the crucifix burned two waxen candles. A plain, uncushioned priedieu stood before this little oratory. A pot of live coals served to take the chill from the room. Two small windows, so placed as to have given the impression from the outside that they followed a staircase, were above the table.

Perhaps there had even been a staircase here once upon a time, but more probably their placement agreed with the arrangement of the windows somewhere else in the structure. This humble room was evidently in a tower, for its shape was circular, and it must have been high up, for birds gathered in the deep sills of the small windows, and every now and then took their flight downward. The priest, still bent far over the table, steadily continued to write. Six or seven large sheets of writing paper, closely written in a fine French hand, lay on the table near him. Beside the sheets, and partly on one of them, were two unfolded bankbills. The corners of the bills on top were raised apart from the one underneath it, for the top bankbill was a very new one. And, as

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by this separation the figure one hundred could be seen on the under bill, these two blue squares of linen paper represented the rather large sum of two hundred francs.

As money has always been and will always be the symbol of wealth, these two unpretentious pieces of paper money looked odd in their setting of poverty.

As the priest finished one page, he pushed it aside and started on the next, only pausing to take ink, and even then his head did not raise, and his eyes remained on the writing. His hand moved quickly, and, like the body, showed strength and energy. And since the head was lowered, the face was in such shadow that it could not be seen.

When he had written about halfway down the page he stopped, hesitated, and began to read over part of what he had written. Then he slowly crossed out the last line; but when he came to the end of the line he did not raise the pen, but let it rest on the paper, and for some time sat thus, as if thinking, still bent over the table, the fingers of the other hand firmly holding down the corner of the paper.

Although the day was dark, the unobstructed light at such a height, falling through the two small windows, fully lit up the bent form and the abundant white hair of the priest, for he was not tonsured.

After a little he laid down the pen, and, sitting up, turned his head and looked up at the windows.

The light came full in his face—it was Pierre Agneau—the clerk at the apothecary shop of Jean Baptist Alla Dekkah.

It will be remembered that when Alla Dekkah had left the pharmacy, a little after midnight, and had reached the corner of the street where the rather wide street crossed the narrow one, there had been a click up the rather wide street, as of a strong lock slipped into its

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place. And Alla Dekkah, venal money-dreamer that he was, had not remarked it.

When Alla Dekkah had given the long pasteboard box to the occupant of the waiting cab and had received from that occupant a sack of gold in return; when he had saluted and the cab door had closed, and the cab had gone speedily up the street, he had not retraced his steps to the pharmacy, as he had said he would, but had gone quickly up the narrow street in the direction of the disappearing cab.

It will also be remembered that he had not walked long until he came to a lamp-post, whose pedestal was thicker than the pedestals of city lamp-posts usually are. And that this pedestal was not thicker from a heavier cast of iron will be divined from what followed, nor that it was without eyes. It had sight, as many things which we naturally know to be inanimate have—its eyes were human eyes. And as there is no sight without a body, so these eyes had a body, and, though it saw everything which had passed, and which was passing or might pass, it was unseen. It had stuck itself to the side of the pedestal, which cast a shadow.

That this wretched being was more than interested in the man who was walking quickly up the street was very apparent from the stretch of his neck and the turnings of his head. And as every man has a name by which he is called or distinguished from his kind, so did this one, and his name was Pierre—the innocent, serious, care-conscienceless Pierre of ten o'clock Christmas eve; the troubled, evil-mocked, memory-taunted, soul-racked Pierre of the midnight of that same night—the vanquished man, who slow-murdered for money and sold his all to the Devil, when the ceasing of the striking of a clock closed up the channel of recollection—and now, the mistrustful spy, hunched up, distorted and flattened like

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an ape, to fool this iron post into thinking his cast shade its own reflected shadow.

It was the clerk in the apothecary shop of Alla Dekkah. It was Pierre Agneau, son of the concierge of a certain apartment building on the Rue La Pérouse.

When Alla Dekkah had told Pierre that he would come back at once, Pierre had not believed him; so that was why Pierre had followed him.

Pierre had clung to the iron pedestal, and this crouched figure had never let his eyes wander from the tall, bent shape of the chemist, who had now slackened his pace, and was walking hesitatingly. Twice he halted, but at last went on, more rapidly than at first, as if decided on some premeditated question.

As he passed a café, he paused, turned back a few steps, for he had passed the entrance, and, after looking down the narrow street in the direction he had come, he disappeared through the doorway.

As the street was deserted, Pierre glided from his hiding place, and cautiously crossed the narrow sidewalk to its walled side. He would go into the café and demand his money. Alla Dekkah could not refuse, in face of the world there. But he did not go toward the café. He only remained motionless as the stone which was behind him; nor did he look in that direction. There was an odd light about his brow which compared strangely with the expression of the jaw. The spot of flesh between the eyebrows was wider than it had been a moment before, and the eyebrows did not press so heavily upon the lids, and there was an almost benign light in the eyes; while the jaw was set and hideously squared and the deep, dangerous lines around the mouth belonged only to a convicted man. The mind had turned back; it trusted, but the body was immobile and could not change, and this was why the face had conflicted so.

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"No, I will not follow him. He has only gone in there to refresh himself. He will come out presently and go back to the pharmacy."

This concluded, he turned and walked quickly back, around the corner, to the small drug shop.

Again he trusted this man, and at this moment the evil of mistrust had left him, and the body partially relaxed its tension. He sat down and waited. The same clock which had been the monitor of that gloomy battlefield sounded the hours. One—and yet no Alla Dekkah appeared. Two—still Pierre waited—still throbbed the clock—the tireless minutes chasing one another into the infinite space of eternity. Three—as the second stroke sounded, the door opened and Alla Dekkah almost slipped through.

Of course, the question of Pierre's money was opened at once, and Dekkah, wishing to keep the entire sum for himself, had decided to give Pierre not a sou of what he had promised.

The weekly salary he thought quite enough for a poor clerk, and he had been foolish to be so generous as to promise two hundred francs for a trifling service of dusting twelve roses—the work of a few minutes—preposterous!

True, that had been of the nature of a bribe—the cheese of a tight trap. The mouse had bitten and had been caught; the roses had been poisoned; the thing was passed, and it was hard to pay; besides, Alla Dekkah was not scrupulous about any promissory note or act, unless it redounded to the credit of his coffers, and in that he was not unlike some of his nobler fellows.

Thus the conversation had become a controversy, which, in turn, led into an incensed slur on character, followed by blows. Though Alla Dekkah was physically better prepared for such assaults than was Pierre, he

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was not a desperate man—his mind was not gloomy—the froth of rage was not boiling in his skull.

Thus it was that after a few blows the chemist fell to the floor, uttering a cry that was indistinguishable, on account of the gurgling sound as of passing air that escaped.

Pierre's hands were vised around the throat of the fallen man. His nails dug into the flesh. The face of the old chemist became purple and it swelled quickly into a bloated, unsightly thing.

Then Pierre released his grip and stared at the helpless mass of flesh at his feet. He was not a hardened criminal, though he had poisoned an unknown person and choked a man in the short space of a few hours.

He revolted at what he had done. Why had he done it? A great fear seized upon him. It shook the very marrow in his bones. What should he do if he should be found here? He would be taken and executed. He rushed to the door, opened it, shut it quickly behind him, and ran at full speed in the direction of the Rivoli. As he crossed, diagonally, the Place de la Concorde, the lights from the many lamps made a large mirror of the smooth, white pavement; for it had been raining, and rain, like imagination, reflects the color and form of what is near it.

As Pierre ran, his shadow followed him on all sides, and he was so fearful of these moving shadows that he stopped every now and then and stared at the glistening, white asphalt around him. He could not think. He had no brain. A frenzy possessed him. He was actuated by instinct, not by thought; for the slimy waters of crime, had stagnated in his brain and his mind was polluted.

When he had crossed the immense paved square he dashed headlong up the quay. He did not slacken this

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onward rush until he had passed the bridge, Alexander III.

He stopped suddenly and ran his hands wildly through his hair. He looked around him and the eyes glanced loosely in the head.

Where was he going? Pierre was going to his mother's. But the murderer could not. He had not reflected. He had choked a man, and in his fright he had thought of nothing but safety, for he was yet innocent, and innocence seeks refuge—only crime concealment. He reeled, staggered backwards and sank limp on the parapet which follows the side of the quay.

Heavy clouds hung near the earth. They were as gloomily oppressive as they were black, but they shifted every now and then, and the blue of a vaulty heaven, lit by the lights of far-off spheres, shone out, down upon the silent night of the slumbering earth. The moon had made gold the lining of the darkest cloud, and the moonbeams shot from under the thick blackness of this wind-borne vapor and weaved below the mystic measures of their own fantastic dance, on the smooth crest of the deep waters of the Seine. There were eddies, too; vortexes of silver light, which pierced the green water like comets that did not disappear, but lingered as if to woo the secret bottom of the river's bed, and in their lighted paths, reflect the weed-entangled treasures on the clear water of the river's crest.

Quiet wrapped this fair corner of the city in the cloak of night—the quays were deserted, and so were the lighted bridges.

Sometimes a faint tinkle and the weary patter of a horse's feet sounded on the near by Cours-la-Reine. An occasional straggler crossed the great bridge of Alexander III and leaned far over the side and looked down into the swift, green current.

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A policeman moved watchfully on his beat farther down the quay. The clear whistle of a gamin floated up the Seine on the soft night air.

Morning had already come—night had gone. The green-eyed toad of debauchery had squinted his lids over his heavy eyes and hopped off under the dark, dank slab of his retreat. The snake of crime had curled himself up, too, in the wineglass of lecherous pleasures, and the urchin of Paris was returning to his haunt in the old city which has for its center that sublime monument of man's toil to Faith—the ancient Cathedral of Notre Dame.

The tune still went on—he was singing now; it was a song of the street; it had the dust of a dancing garden in its rhythm and the scum of human intellect in its amorous equivocated verse.

The stone buildings—the dwelling houses of Paris—were still and unlighted, save where the moon burnished the wet surface of the roofs and silhouetting the chimney pots made cylindric mirrors. To the west the minarets of the Trocadéro raised in the enchanted grace of the Orient against the blackness of the Parisian sky. The interlaced ironwork of the Tower of Eiffel cut the thickness of the clouds a little to the south. Farther on the wide gilded dome of the Invalides caught the light of the twice-reflected sun and sent it back, thrice lovelier than it had come, while close beside, the towers of Ste. Clotilde lifted nobly to heaven their Gothic spires.

The cool, searching wind of the morn had begun to blow, and the naked branches of the trees were sighing, for it was Christmas morn—it was winter. The gold of the moon had paled to a silver, and the stars were growing small and blinked more than during the first hours of the night. And yet Pierre did not stir.



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He had experienced one of those shocks from which man rarely recovers. He had believed himself the aggressed, when suddenly he found himself the aggressor in the eye of the world.

And where is the man whose convictions can form a moated wall against the slurs of human tongues?

He was a felon, but something within him—something that speaks to us when we do wrong or when we lean near the abyss of evil—God—told him he was not. All of a sudden he began to shake convulsively. His body lifted from the parapet while his hands clung to the wall, and then the stupor seized him again and he fell down over the smooth stone of the wall. At last he woke. The argentine reflection of the moon in the deep water below the parapet shone full in his face. His bloodshot eyes opened wide and the colorless lips gaped. He uttered a cry, but no sound came. It was the face of Alla Dekkah. He was laughing at him from the bottom of hell. His face was twisted, distorted, shapeless as when Pierre had left him senseless upon the floor of the pharmacy. He drew back from the wall and stared at the dark bank of the opposite side of the river, and for one moment he saw nothing but the stone embankment. Gradually everything inanimate took on human shape—formed faces—many faces—thousands of faces.

Pierre half closed his eyes—still they grew—they were everywhere—they were all about him. It was the head of the old chemist—he was grinning—his yellow teeth ground together.

The unhappy man glanced about him with one frightened look—a look which only sees through the twisted windows of the imagination; and he started to run down the quay. He ran straight ahead; he did not look round, for terror cramped his reason. When he had passed two bridges and had followed the bend of the river, he came

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to the bridge of Solférino. He stopped and looked across at the enclosure of the Garden of the Tuileries. The tops of some of the taller trees of the Garden lifted their bared branches above the Terrasse des Feuillants. They were moving. He wondered why he had run so fast, why he had turned back, and he wondered where he was going and where he was. He tried to answer these questions, but his mind was thick.

He looked at the Tuileries and guessed it—the Luxembourg. He looked at the cobbled way and thought it the Rue de Médicis. He looked across the bridge and was puzzled, why a side street off the Rue de Médicis should have so many lights.

He leaned over the parapet and was confused, for Paris has only one water and that is the Seine; and the Rue de Médicis does not follow this great water way.

Just then his eyes rested on a lamp-post, which stood directly in front of where he had stopped. Everything came back to him with the rush of a great tidal wave—the place where he was and the cause of his torment and flight.

He was Pierre Agneau. He had killed a man with his sins broadcast to heaven. He was standing on the Quai des Tuileries. It was after midnight. No one was around.

The Seine was very near him. The lap of the deep green waters far below gurgled in his ears—it surrounded him, it numbed his feelings, it lulled his mind, it soothed his troubled sight, it whispered to his tormented soul,—“Wanderer, seek my depths; there alone is rest.”

He would drown himself and the agony of life would be wiped out forever—the blank of the unknown enticed him.

If he lived on, if he should hide himself forever from the world, he could not hide himself from Heaven, he

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could not dig out his conscience. God was within him, but if he died, if he sank into the silent waters of the Seine, then he would be dead and consciousness would have ceased. His eyes would see no more horrid shapes. His body would feel no more uncanny clutches from the grave. His mind would not torment him, for it would not think. The fishes would eat the flesh and the wet frame would serve as a finny retreat. The seaweed and rubbish of a river bed would wrap around the bones, but Pierre would feel no pain, no anguish, no remorse, he would be at peace—

Peace! would there be peace in suicide?—would he vanish into an infinitude of oblivion? Was death as painless, as senseless, as remorseless, as sweet, as profound as the sleep of infancy?

But would Pierre die with his body? Would what tormented him die? That which makes birth attractive, and death repellant—that all—that which is the real self—the God in man—the soul. No, it is immortal. Alas! where was peace, if life could not give it, if death did not hold it? Did the vast unknown, the hereafter, offer it? Maybe heaven did; but Paradise was for blessed souls; his was an accursed one, twice stabbed with the knife of crime. His place was where the blue, phosphoric light lit up the cavern of evil; where caldrons bubbled with the stews of vices, harkened down from earth; a place where witches screeched and demons hooted.

So real was this conceived inferno, that the miserable Pierre believed that he saw a cloud of brimstone belch from out a pot, and in the blast of smoke the face of the old chemist appeared and grinned again at him, as it had done in the water of the Seine.

"Oh! infamous wretch that I am, to send a soul into such eternal horror!"

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It was an internal exclamation cried out in the solitude of the frenzied man's brain.

"Unhappy I; peace is not more mine."

He had been walking all the time this mental chaos had been going on, and when he at last awoke from the hideous nightmare he was leaning over the wall of the bridge of Solférino, looking, without seeing, into the river below.

The sound of footsteps made him look back. Some one was coming toward him. It was a policeman—he was coming to take him to prison. Without waiting to see if what he had surmised was true, he turned and walked rapidly in the opposite direction. When he had gained the south side of the river and was partly hidden by the parapet of the south embankment, he turned to make sure if the man were still following him. The policeman came on, and evidently he was searching for the man who had been leaning over the Pont de Solférino.

Pierre could see his face in the bright lights of the bridge and he seemed peering into the darkness of the south side of the river, where Pierre had disappeared. There was only one hope of escape, the narrow winding streets of the quarter he now found himself in.

He crossed the quay and turned down one of these small streets. He listened for footsteps, but everything was silent. No one followed. He wandered on. He did not know where he was except that he was on the south side of the Seine, past the bridge of Solférino, and that meant that he was near the heart of the Latin Quarter. He was not running now, but he tread uneasily on the pavement and kept close to the wall of the buildings. The streets seemed deserted and now and then, when some one did pass, he would hide himself in a dark angle or in a projected shadow and after he had watched him pass by he would come out and walk on.

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He was like all evil—cunning.

Why he walked thus, and how long, he never knew. He felt as if he had been buried and had gotten out of the grave. What had happened from twelve until now had been the unfounded fears of a dead man. It was all too hideous to be real, for he had seen inferno, and Alla Dekkah was there.

As a clock in a tower was striking the hour of four, the wretched man was still walking aimlessly. He had just turned the corner off a dingy street and was following the line cut by a high wall on the sidewalk. At equal distances the wall extended in stout squares out upon the narrow sidewalk and the shadows cast by the side of these squares into the recesses they thus formed were very dark. All at once the wall ended and a high iron fence loomed up in its stead. Through the grating could be seen a flight of steps, and beyond the steps a stone pile rose up indiscernible in the darkness of the morn. This was the church and the wall, the enclosure of the cloister. If Pierre had looked up he would have seen two shadowy spiral forms painted against the starlit blue of the sky; but the miserable man did not, for the place of heaven is above, and involuntarily, to look up is to be hopeful—is to trust; and since that unfathomable principle lies deep, it is not to be shammed, for trust is the cellar of the soul.

He had just passed the iron gate, when he heard a voice exclaim: "Pierre, Pierre, is that you?"

He started, but he did not stop; he only quickened his pace. Again came the gentle call. He knew that voice. He stopped, looked round and saw the frocked figure of an old priest coming quickly after him. The light from a street lamp shone full in the old man's face. It was Father François—the priest who had taught him his Latin in the monastery, fourteen years before, when

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Pierre was a child of twelve. All the recollections of his childhood returned to him; for memory is the tide of human life. It covers up the dry sand of the mind; it digs out the coral of past pleasure and polishes off the grime of every day action on the broad water sleeve of the sea nymph—Fancy. It gathers up the seaweed of sorrow and floats it on the strong water of its current; it hunts out the lurking cave where lies the ill-committed deeds of human life and sends them out to writhe broadcast before the minds keen eye, and makes of man a dreamer, if not a coward.

Pierre told the old priest of his need of two hundred francs. He told him how that the chemist had promised him the two hundred francs, if he dusted one dozen roses, and that after he had prepared the roses, Alla Dekkah had refused him the money. Pierre did not tell Father François that he had choked the chemist; he could not bring himself to do so. Father François had told Pierre to come with him, and he would try and help him. Thus the saint and culprit, side by side, had crossed the Seine, and had walked all the way to the little church, which had a circular room in one of its towers—the church near the height of the Butte Montmartre—the church where Pierre now sat writing to his mother. While the priest had slept, Pierre on his little bench had remained wide-awake. Through the narrow window he had seen the starlight fade; he had heard a sparrow on the high-up sill welcome the Christmas dawn with his hymeneal chant. He had seen one streak of light enter the darkness of the sky and then another and another; and so amalgamate that an opaque-grayness formed where once the blackness of the night had spread. When the sun had risen Pierre was still sitting on the wooden bench, bent forward, his elbows resting on his knees, his hands clasped fiercely, his bloodshot eyes still staring at

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the high-up window, but the hair had turned snow-white, and there was a bruised line below the nether lip, where the teeth had sunk during the agony of the past night.

He was a strong man, though yet in the early season of his twenties, and with all this *mélée* of emotions—this tempest of struggles against remorse—he had not wept—no tear had fallen to soothe his troubled mind.

After a little the priest had risen and the two had gone down to the early services. About noon Pierre returned to the small, circular room. He was alone, for the old priest had gone to ask a bishop—a friend of his—to lend him the money. Soon the heavy latch lifted and the old priest stood before Pierre with two bankbills on his outstretched palm.

It was too much—that money—the price of his soul—there it was before him—a holy man held it to him—was it true?

This was another dream, and a seraph of heaven stood before him. He grew giddy. Everything wheeled about him. He burst into an uncontrolled laugh—the hoarse laugh of a doomed man, who sees the chain of fate unlinked before him.

“The money—the two hun”— The word died unfinished on his lips. He reeled and fell senseless to the stone floor. When he awoke, the old priest was bending over him and there was a smell of camphor, which mingled with the mold of the dampness that clung to the walls. Then Pierre had told Father François that he wanted to become a priest, and had asked to be permitted to put on the vestment now. The old priest had smiled, but had consented; and Pierre had dressed himself in a shabby frock, worn by time, eaten by moths and coated with the slime of humidity.

When Pierre had finished the letter he rose, walked over to where the humble oratory was and knelt down.

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It was the first prayer which he had offered since before the clock of the pharmacy had struck the hour of Holy Mass, and as his lips moved great tears gathered in his eyes and streamed over the haggard cheeks and fell fast on the worn vestment. They were only the scalding tears of a penitent, but, like all misery, they stained where they fell.

After he had risen from the priedieu he stood still and looked up at the dark, dingy, vaulted ceiling. His hands, palm to palm, were turned upward, too. It must have been one of those internal bursts of gratitude which man so often expresses thus; the involuntary proof of an eased soul.

He had done wrong and he had suffered. He had been confronted by those myriads of specter monsters which always lodge in the mind of human life, when there is a contradiction in the brain, when the soul as plaintiff rebukes the defending mind. It is then that these distorted phantoms come out and murmur unintelligible words—incomprehensible because they are too past, but none the less tormenting because they are recollections. He had been haunted and laughed at by all these monsters. He had scoffed at them. But it is as impossible for a man to laugh back at the accusation of his own brain as it is for life to mock at the origin of evil. They both redound to the truth, and truth is an unpleasant monopoly when shut up inside the skull of a self-accusing man.

Now that he was at peace with all these unsightly specters he felt a certain species of quietude, a bonified mysticism, that seemed to make the atmosphere about him clear. The pressure of an indescribable tranquillity, which soothed his conscience.

He crossed the small room and went to where a worn flat hat hung on a nail. He, evidently, was going



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out, for he put on the hat and walked toward the door. He opened it and went out, carefully closing the door behind him, and started down the small, winding staircase.

As Pierre had never climbed or gone down this stairway but three times before, he was unacquainted with its odd turnings, its small, narrow stones, which made a descent like that of a ladder. And, too, the stairs were very dark; only a small, unsteady lamp flickered far down, very near the bottom. As Pierre groped his way down the spiral flight of stairs he could easily feel the coated, slimy, humidity which covered all the stones, both wall and steps.

At last he reached the bottom, and, passing through many small, vaulted rooms, circular in shape, unused and obviously belonging to the tower, he at last came out into the church proper. The church was like many of its kind. It had its nave flanked with double aisles, its chapels, its galleries, its organ, its choir, its columns, and it was not without its stained glass. It had something about it very much like its mother edifice—the aged cathedral of Notre Dame—but, like all children, it was different; and, of course, it was not the fault of this church that it was born in a modern century.

Many tall waxen candles burnt brightly on the High Altar, and in the chapels there were flickering ones. The deep shadows, caught in the far-up dome and in the roofs and covered ambulatories, held their gloomy aspect, for the sunshine which came through the windows was falsely colored. Its shade was somber, but maybe that was not so much an interior as an exterior cause, for, as before said, the day was a dark one, and when a sunbeam pierced a cloud it seemed accidental.

As Pierre reached the middle of one of these double aisles and passed one of the small chapels which adjoined

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this aisle, he heard a weeping, as the weeping of a child, a very young child. He stopped, and, turning back, saw the form of a young girl stretched over a priedieu in the small chapel he had just passed. She was sobbing convulsively. She looked about fourteen years of age. Her gay-colored, ragged clothes gave to her lithe, youthful form a fantastic aspect. Short, loose chestnut ringlets covered her head. On the floor near the kneeling desk was a basket of faded violets. She was kneeling on the priedieu, her face buried in her folded arms, which rested on the back of the desk. She had evidently come to church to pray, and had broken down and wept.

Pierre walked over and laid his hand on the child's head. The girl looked up with a start when touched, but quieted on seeing the priest and on hearing his soothing words. Despite the tear-stained, ashen color of the girl's face, she was very beautiful. Her type was of the Spanish kind, save for the irregularity of the nose, which was Parisian. The frightened, gazelle eyes were shadowed by long, black, curving lashes, which swept her cheeks when she looked down. The lips were slightly parted and showed a regular row of sharp, small, white teeth. Sicilian gold earrings peeped from the chestnut ringlets, while around her pretty neck were several strings of pink, glass beads.

When the girl looked into the face of the young priest—Pierre—she at once saw his sympathetic disposition, and, weighted to desperation by her grief, and no longer feeling strength to support her burden alone, she told sobbingly, and without being questioned, the story of her sorrow; how that she had stolen and how it had all come about; how, when she and her master had been selling flowers on the Place de la Concorde, some one had come, and, after buying a bunch of violets, had slipped a letter into the flower basket and had gone away, and that her

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master had said they must go at once to Monsieur the chief's.

The girl told how that on the way to the chief's her master had chuckled and had said he wished all the boss' customers were like that—"Fifty francs to carry a letter to Monsieur Bordet." Then how, when they were passing La Cigale, he had said that he would go to the performance that night and be a cockney a few days. How, while he was gone, she had read the letter which he had given her to hold until he would come out.

With religious precision she told the young priest the contents of the letter as she had been able to decipher it through the thin, clouded envelope, for the letter was tightly sealed. And then she went on, in her confession, and told how, when her master had come out of La Cigale, he had gone on toward the Boulevard Barbès, and, when at the corner, he had left her to sell flowers while he went to the chief's house. When he had returned he had told her to go at once and steal a pair of gauntlets, which they had seen a tinter, a certain Madame Fabet, lay out in the court of her shop early that morning as they passed by.

He had said: "Madame Fabet will be at church—no one will see you. Monsieur the chief wants them. Now go along and mind what I say. Remember the thongs."

When she had childishly detailed the cause of her sin, she straightened her small, lithe body almost fiercely and looked at the young priest. "Ah! *mon père*, I did not want to do it, but my master made me. I would have been beaten if I had refused. Oh! to think of stealing from this good, kind woman!"

For the first time since she had begun to speak tears filled her eyes, but she drove them back and continued:

"Once she gave me a *puit d'amour*, and another time, when I was selling toy rabbits near her shop, an ear of

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one of the rabbits broke off, and when I cried she bought it, and she's a poor woman, for nobody has much tinting done in this quarter. When I got to the court the gloves were still in their place, drying. I looked around; there was no one—the place was deserted—the gloves lay very near me. Just as I stretched out my hand toward them a strange voice right beside me said: 'Lizette, Lizette, don't take them.' I jumped back and looked around. I saw no one. I looked at the gloves. Nobody had touched them; there they were. Then I remembered the cat o' nine tails—I felt them—I snatched the gloves and ran. Oh! how wicked I am! Why had I not been killed this morning under the wheel of that great, big auto on Rue d'Amsterdam!"

She sobbed so violently that her words were almost incoherent.

"You, holy father, do not know what a life my people live; they are all murderers, and now I am a thief. Pray for me, holy father, that I may make the rest of my life as sinless as yours has been."

An agonized expression darted on the face of Pierre, and he moved uneasily, but the girl did not see his emotion, for she had let her head fall on the priedieu and was sobbing wildly. All of a sudden she looked up, and in a hollow voice went on:

"I have tried to pray just now, but everything laughs at me. Will the Ave Maria never hear me again?"

Pierre did not hear the girl's plea. A strange light was in his eye and the cold perspiration stood out upon his body—"That I may make my life as sinless as yours." Unconsciously this child of the street had struck the keynote of the tragedy of his life. He heard the clock of the pharmacy strike twelve; he saw the form of Alla Dekkah helpless at his feet; he saw the green depths of the Seine, and the horrid heads, bodyless, of

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Alla Dekkah, which floated everywhere about him. The frightful nightmare of inferno was vivid in his memory. Sinless—a slow-murderer and a murderer—sinless?

Suddenly he felt the hot blood surge to his head—it was the shame of truth. Was it just that he sham the part of sanctity? That he belie the guileless? Was it not infamous that he, felon, should wear the cloak of purity? Was he not committing another offense in the sight of Heaven? Would it not be better to denounce himself?

His mind cleared, and then he remembered that if he could save this life, prevent this murder of which this child had confessed, he might gain peace—balm to his remorse-eaten soul, and maybe Paradise at death. Yes, that would be far better. He soothed the troubled child. It was very easy to do, for children are simple of mind. Let sympathy be shown in the eye and the tongue can be dumb.

“What is this?” he at last ventured to question, “that is to happen in the Bois—a murder?”

“Oh! yes,” replied the girl; “that’s all such a letter can mean to Monsieur the chief,” and she again repeated what she had been able to read of the letter: “— ‘you will be a rich man — — — this evening Monsieur must have — — — exactly like — — — in the Bois du Boulogne — that this person must be sure dead’ — — —”

She caught her breath—“And making me steal a pair of gauntlets—what else can it mean?—they are going to kill some one.”

Pierre now understood as well as the girl did what was to happen. He asked her where her people lived and she told him. While the priest and the girl talked they were so interested that neither noticed a figure which had stealthily come into the church shortly after the girl had commenced her confession, and which stood

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near the entrance watching the movements of the girl and the priest.

A bell, far up in one of the towers of the church, sounded. The girl, frightened, leaped to her feet and grabbed her basket.

"I must go. They didn't know I came. I'll be beaten if I'm out at this hour."

"Go, my child—you have no sin." And with the blessing of Pierre Agneau, the slight, graceful creature quickly and noiselessly left the chapel and passed down the half of the long aisle and was soon at the entrance. She did not turn and look back but only for one short moment, when she crossed herself and then went out.

The figure, which heard this dialogue, glided behind two massive columns as the girl left the chapel; and when the priest looked after the child, as she hesitated upon the threshold of the entrance, the same shadow that had flickered unseen on the stone pavement in front of the small chapel while the girl had told the story of her first theft now shaded the side of Pierre's face. But it was as unremarked as it had been before. Pierre was thinking what he should do—how he could save this life. He realized that it must be done quickly. At last he hit upon a conclusion. Pierre did not know this quarter, but he remembered a certain police station which he and the old priest had passed early in the morning. He knelt and offered up a short prayer in the small chapel.

Pierre had no sooner passed under the door and gone down the street, than the figure standing behind the columns followed quickly after him. The person soon came very near Pierre, but did not pass him, only followed cautiously at a near distance.

Pierre walked down the street and mailed the letter to his mother. Before he slipped it into the box he kissed the envelope just where it was sealed. A despairing, for-

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saken look came into his face as the white piece of paper disappeared into the box. Then he went on to the corner, where he turned right and went down a short, blind street.

Soon the sound of footsteps coming quickly behind him made Pierre halt and look around abruptly; the fear of the criminal had not left him. But no one was coming after him. He had not gone much farther down the short street when he again turned another corner, and this time to the left. The street was dark and dingy and very narrow. As Pierre hurried along a new thought came to him—was he walking into the guillotine? But he dismissed it at once, not wishing to allow himself to be tempted by it. He must save this life at no matter what cost. If he were taken by the police, if he must die, very well. His mother would not have to go to prison now. The money was already on the way. So he walked on quickly, thinking only of gaining the police station. He was not enough of a priest to think of praying at so tense a moment. Just then, as he was passing a dilapidated stucco building, some one caught him, dragged him into a hall, and heavy doors were quickly and noiselessly shut.

Many hands grasped him, and in the darkness (for the interior of the building had the blackness of the river Styx) it was impossible to discern the number or the character of his assailants. It was well-nigh out of the question to struggle, since his captors had the advantage in number over him; besides, he had been taken unawares. They dragged him—something not difficult to do—along a seemingly great hall, and at last down a narrow stairs, and shoved him into a room. The door was slammed and locked. Pierre heard the retreating steps.

The room was pitch-dark. Pierre felt the floor and then the wall, and he realized that he must be in an un-

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derground cell. His first thought was that he had been taken by the police. And then he knew that that could not be, for the police would not put him in such a place as this. A light appeared far up through a small grating, and Pierre could see that this underground cell was shaped like an immense vat or well. Evidently, it was from this small barred opening that the air came into this dungeon. While he stood gazing at the spot of artificial light the faces of two men appeared at the grating. They did not stay long, but soon passed on, and the light went with them.

Nevertheless, it was long enough for Pierre to recognize one as a man he had often seen selling flowers on the Concorde. Then he understood all. This man was the person who had stood in the shadow of a column as he had left the church. Pierre remembered it now. He was the owner of the child, and he had followed her to the church, and had, no doubt, overheard all.

This man had followed him, and it was his footsteps that he had heard coming behind him on the short, blind street. This man had suspected him of doing just what he had been going to do—go to the police.

Of course, these ruffians were going to kill him. But, then, if they had intended to do that, why not have killed him at once! A knife, a moment, and life would be extinct. It took longer to bring him here than it would to have killed him. No; very likely he was only to be held until the crime was perpetrated and then let out. Oh! how horrible! To allow this deed to be accomplished was worse than death. Could he not get out somewhere? In desperation he tried different ways, but at last realized how foolish were such attempts.

The cold perspiration beaded on his forehead and he suffered on, fully understanding his powerless position.



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With a helpless sigh he sank on his knees. He could not give succor physically, but he could mentally; it was all he could do—and so fervent was the prayer, so violent the emotions, that the body writhed and the mind quivered like a man who is in a delirium.

## CHAPTER XIX.

"No, I shall not want him any more to-day," said Alverstone, as he threw the lines to the groom, dismounted and turned to leave the stables.

"But Monsieur will not walk in his riding clothes?"

Alverstone took no heed of the man, and the interrogating voice went on:

"Monsieur will have a carriage?"

"No!" snapped Alverstone, without stopping or even turning his head. His voice was harsh and stern, and his manner so severe, so forbidding, that he was questioned no further, but allowed to pass up the avenue, which he had taken at a headlong rate of speed—going, as they said, like one possessed.

The men were not a little surprised, for they had never known this American to behave in a manner at once so rude and repellant. His custom was to remain in the stables until his horse had been put away. In these stables Alverstone had put his horse when he first came to Paris, and there his horse stayed, no difference how long he was away on a voyage to other lands. Small wonder, then, his servants were taken unawares at conduct so unusual.

The horse, standing so proudly where his rider had dismounted, awaited the customary pats; instead, he heard only the retreating footsteps of his master. He turned his beautiful head and watched Alverstone go down the incline and out the door. Still seemingly surprised, and without moving his head, he pricked forward his ears and listened to the footsteps as they grew fainter

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up the avenue, for Alverstone had passed out of sight of the horse soon after leaving the stables.

Evidently, the loving creature felt himself neglected by the man, whom he loved as only a gentle, high-bred horse can love his master. As the footsteps were lost amid the other sounds vibrating the air, the graceful, gentle head dropped down, far down. His spirits seemed to be gone and he looked like a sick horse. His feelings were hurt, his pride wounded. He had expected the usual pats, the cheery voice, the words of praise and the lump of white sugar or the rosy apple. He had received none of these proofs of kindness; instead, he had been treated as if he were a poor, forlorn Paris cab horse, and of that class one of the lowest grade, for even a kind-hearted cabman is prodigal of his little tokens of appreciation.

No, noble Beauty went on his way as crushed in spirit as was his master, for his master went on his way, his splendid body racked from the tension of overwrought nerves. He had thrown the lines to the horse and the power to the nerve force within his being at one and the same time; and now Alverstone was deposed. He existed not at all, so far as his consciousness of men and things was concerned.

One thought alone consumed all other thoughts within his brain, and it was quite natural that at such a time he should forget this mute friend—his faithful Beauty.

On Avenue de Friedland he had been rude to Julia. He had let her know that he had seen her and that he had refused to recognize her; but the amazed, injured expression of her face haunted him like the ghost of the happier self, and it seemed he could not rid himself of the picture of the havoc he had caused.

Though he tried to dislike Julia, he continued to love her with all the ardor of his nature, and he could cause her no pain which would not react upon himself and

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eat at his vitals. After his ill behavior on Friedland he had relented, and, turning his horse, had followed Julia's carriage, until he saw, as he had suspected, that she was going to the Signor Novara's house. Then he dashed off, taking the Rue de Courcelles, hoping to make the "V" of Courcelles and Murillo, and come out on the Rue Rembrandt before Julia's carriage should pass the Rue Murillo. He had then intended to meet her again, and this time to make full amends for his ill behavior.

But when he had come in sight of the maestro's door—his entire being mellowed by repentance—he had found himself confronted by a scene which had maddened him beyond recall.

No, never again would he speak to her. He had been her true lover, and she knew what that meant, when the lover was an American. And her freedom of manner with Lieutenant Trent would be an exasperating insult to any man who had solemnly vowed his undying love for her.

She had tried to anger him. The trifle, the despicable flirt. She had been chatting in utmost familiarity. Why, nothing short of kinship, next to that of brother, could excuse it. No, never, never, would he see this woman again. He was unable to understand how it had been possible that he could have been so blind in his estimation of her virtues.

Alverstone had tried hard to calm his rage by a hard, dashing ride, but at last, when he could endure the nervous strain no longer, he had gone to the stable and left his horse and started to walk.

He stumbled on blindly, following any street presented, if unconsciously making a choice then taking the one that presented the least obstruction to his onward rush.

He did not know how long he had walked. One moment the hot blood hissed in his ears, and then clammy

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chills shivered his frame. He had suffered himself to be blindly driven thus, until he was awakened from his somnambulistic state by the suddenness of something strangely new before him.

For a moment his mind paused in its action, and he attempted to grasp the situation. What stretched out before him was not a busy boulevard; it was not a narrow street; it was a necropolis. He walked on, passed under the viaduct and halted at the circle called the Carrefour de la Croix, for it has in its center a cross, and beneath this monument are interred the victims of the coup d'état of 1852.

Alverstone was not there to notice monuments. His heart and soul were filled with deeds of the living, and the deeds of those honored by this great monument could have none of his thoughts. His heart was breaking, and in the battle he had been waging he had been conquered—nay, he had been more than conquered, for his heart was crushed, and life to him was without value.

He turned and looked in the direction northwest from where he stood.

It was like all cemeteries, dull, cold and deathlike, and it gave added strength to the chill from which he already suffered.

It was one of the large burial grounds of a great city. It had a name to distinguish it from its sister graveyards, and it was called Montmartre, because it slept at the bottom of the high hill by that name.

Alverstone did not stand long, but walked up the main avenue—by name, the Avenue de la Croix. Why he turned to the right of the main way is not easily understood, but some force prompted him to turn to the right, and not to the left, at this particular moment.

Had Alverstone himself been questioned as to why, he had been unable to give the reason, for he had no

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will in the matter. The way he took mounted the right terrace. While it was not a narrow way, yet it was small, and the avenue he had just left was a main drive-way.

Alverstone halted and turned around. This movement was as involuntary as had been that of the choice of way. He looked up at the dull gray sky, then down at the moist earth, and around upon the many piles of stone fashioned to suit the sentiment of those whose sad privilege it had been to place them there.

No living thing seemed stirring. He looked down into the valley where he had been, but he made no movement to descend.

There was a figure bent over and evidently searching along the curbing for something that had been lost.

At first Alverstone thought it a policeman, but when the figure straightened itself he saw it was enveloped in a long cloak, and not the customary cape of the police of Paris.

The figure continued to search for some time, but finally, though very reluctantly, as evidenced by the repeated attempts to recover the lost article, the seeker went slowly away.

Alverstone recognized the form as that of the cloaked person who, on last evening, had gotten into the cab on the small street adjoining the Boulevard des Capucines.

"Yes," he mused, "the same cloak, the same gliding motion, the same height." Everything, he thought, pointed to a perfect identity, except that the figure was more slender of form.

The woman—for he pronounced the unknown figure, what from her dress and gait he inferred her to be—passed under the viaduct, and the shadow cast by this elevated street obscured her rapidly moving person. Al-

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verstone looked after the disappearing woman, and the words, "As strong as possible," came to his mind, but as quickly passed out unheeded.

Then he turned and went on for some time, surrounded by the ominous silence which pervaded the place. The healthy elasticity of his extraordinary body reasserted itself, and Alverstone was almost himself again, for, though to a degree disturbed, he had passed out of the dangerous state, in which a less fortified man had done himself violence.

He now thought unconcernedly of all that so recently had threatened to dethrone his reason.

He turned a sharp corner, and, after walking a few steps, he came face to face with the backs of three high, narrow monuments. They stood close together, side by side, but the roofs of the mausoleums extended beyond the walls of the sepulchres, and, therefore, though no one might pass his arm through the opening, any one could easily see and recognize a person on the other side from him.

On suddenly finding this barrier obstructing his way, Alverstone made a movement to go around the three mausoleums, when a low growl attracted his attention.

He stopped—voices were near, and he could also hear the soft, stealthy tread of feet that were guided by brains within that order of men the most debased—the sneak.

It was evident there were several persons together. Though Alverstone had never felt the unknighly position of concealment, he now thought it the better part of wisdom to stand perfectly still on the spot where he then found himself. The approachers paused on the other side of the mausoleum from Alverstone, and for a little while he feared that a desperate time was at hand,

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for they seemed on the eve of a great quarrel, and a quarrel among such men means death at the same time.

He heartily wished himself away from the spot, but retreat or advance without detection was equally impossible. He hoped they would pass on without knowledge of his proximity, for he supposed them on their way to the gate.

"Why in the devil do you carry that lantern? They'll catch us yet."

"Oh," piped a high, thin voice, in answer to the degraded questioner, "that's the very reason I carry it. A lantern isn't a suspicious thing; it's an honest tool. The other day when I had this lantern I was taken for a workman. Now, if that's not honest, what is?"

"That may be," replied the first voice; "but I saw the cop spy you out when you crossed the viaduct."

There was a restless movement, and many voices spoke at once. There was a harsh voice; a gritting, toothy voice, and the high, thin voice that carried the lantern. They all snarled menacingly as they cried, "*Au diable* with the discourses; we want money—gold—gold. We've come here for money, and we want money."

"Come"—it was the growling voice that answered, with a threat—"if you don't stop this noise at once I'll see that you don't howl any more."

Then followed low, discontented mutterings; but they were less noisy, and did not venture to speak loud. No doubt, they understood too well the force of the threat.

"Remember the motto," said the growling voice: " 'Who kills best gets' "—

The voice ceased, and Alverstone heard distinctly the jingling of many gold pieces.

Alverstone sincerely wished that he had shown himself at once. He reproached himself for having stood



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still, for now he could not go. He had heard enough to understand that something nefarious was about to take place, and the group on the other side would, of course, understand that, too, and effectually quell the danger from his secretly gained knowledge. He was afraid to move, for well he knew what would be the result of his discovery. He looked around him and was glad that the day had grown dark—rapidly dark, as is often the case at this season of the year in Paris. Had the elements not thus ministered to his safety by throwing around him that heavy, gray cloak of mist and fog, his place of concealment would have been quite insecure; for, though the mausoleums were high, the spaces between their walls were large enough to make hiding perilous, unless one stood very still, and this was a difficult matter—quite a feat.

"Tell me the place and the man is dead," clamored the voices, in loud hisses—hisses of such eagerness that Alverstone was sickened at the sound of them.

"Is everything ready?" demanded the growling voice. This voice, as was easily understood, came from the directing force of the crowd, and it vibrated savagely upon the dusky-gray of the evening.

"Yes, Monsieur Bordet," responded a low, ominously monotonous voice. "The livery is ready, and the carriage will be at No. 60 at five-forty."

This was the first time Alverstone had heard this voice. The tones were gloomy and sepulchral, and never to be forgotten, even had they been heard amid less gloomy and less forbidding surroundings.

"Are these horses spirited?" again put the leader.

"Spirited as the Devil at midnight," again answered the monotonous voice.

"Come, Anatole," went on the chief; "you'll be coachman."

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"Yes, at your bidding, Monsieur le chef," quickly responded the gritting, toothy voice.

"Now René"—it was the chief who still spoke—"set down that lantern and make your ears pointed. Do you understand?"

"Yes, I'm ready"—it was the thin, piping voice made reply to this.

"You must be footman."

Alverstone could see without peering the silhouette of a man. He was short and thin, but with thick-set muscles. His black hair was not abundant, but ill kept, and it clung tightly to the back of the neck. He wore a battered hat and his clothes were too small for his miserable body, horribly misshapen by a degraded and debauched imagination.

"Do you know the duties of a footman?" next put the leader.

"Yes, my chief, and all the attendant ceremony; so and so," and while he made the few movements Alverstone saw his face well, and it was a face such as his criminally distorted body would warrant his having, and under the slightest excitement it would be capable of filling the beholder with terror, for no mercy could be expected from that man, unless it was sought under the protection of his ever-changing emotion. The sallow skin was tightly drawn upon the face, and the sullen set of the jaw showed accomplishment of any determined plan of action, while the small black eyes glittered hard with an unearthly expression of hideous portentousness.

"Well done!" cried the growling voice of the chief, when the acting footman had finished his mimic show. "We shall make a capital job of it. Not a spark of life left. You, Germain, you must go to the Bois and

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stay where the walnut tree goes out into the road. You remember the place?"

"Yes, I do."

"Well, you're to stay there, and when the carriage approaches, if everything goes well, you are to keep perfectly quiet until it stops; but if," with fierce emphasis on the conjunction, "there is any one around, you are to whistle the E. G. P. whistle."

"But, my chief," objected the gritting, toothy voice, "since we finished that Lyonnais there a policeman has been stationed right at the walnut tree."

"How do you know that?" roughly demanded the chief.

"Oh, I heard a driver at the Café des Cochers say so, and he knows, for he belongs to that quarter."

A low, hurried conversation followed, and Alverstone thought that, without doubt, the chief was consulting with his lieutenant. After a brief lapse of time the chief spoke:

"Very well, the place is changed. Your post is at the pool, where the willows go around it. Do you know it?"

"Yes, my chief."

This entire band knew all the dark spots of the Bois de Boulogne; in fact, the dark spots of all the outlying posts of operation for their diabolical deeds.

"Then all's settled," went on the chief. "Germain, you go to the willow pool, at six o'clock to-night. Keep your wits well about you. Wait patiently and listen carefully. You know the penalty if you are caught napping, either with your eyes open or shut. Open the door, throw the cloak over her head, drag her out. She'll not struggle long, and no noise can come from her. Carry her into the thicket and stab her twice in the heart. Then she'll be dead," and he laughed fiendishly.

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"Be careful, Germain; she might get off the cloak, and maybe she's pious, and she'll pray you to save her."

"Ha! ha! not I," laughed Germain. "I killed a child who begged to finish its prayers. Nothing has ever stopped my hand, and nothing can."

"Yes, there is something can," piped the high, thin voice of René, with a wicked, yet morbid-toned mirth. "Death will."

"Ugh!" retorted the angry Germain; "really, here's an ass with a goose-beak, that calls himself an owl, and carries about a lantern by day to play out his wisdom."

"Here, stop your wrangling and let me finish. After she's killed you must get back to the stables as soon as possible, but don't drive so fast that the police will notice you. They're always suspicious of fast-going vehicles. Come back by the Exterior Boulevards." Then, turning to another, he said: "Now, Anatole, you're the coachman. See that you hold a firm hand. You leave No. 60 at five-forty. It will take fifteen minutes to get to the place."

Then the chief lowered his voice to a mere whisper, and, though Alverstone listened hard, he heard nothing.

A west wind was carrying the heavy clouds close to the earth, and the increased gloom was oppressive.

It was horrible to think that he could not move. If he could but go at once and notify the police of the intention of these desperadoes before they would leave the cemetery! But, though he might descend the terrace in the mist and deepening shadows, he yet knew that the slightest movement upon his part would be attended with more or less disturbance of the air, something easily perceptible to such persons. And, too, his feet coming in contact with the gravel walk would more than likely make a noise. And, were he put to the chase, he knew full well that this gang could soon distance him, in a

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few bounds, for he was no athlete; in fact, he had never in his life given any attention to the simplest stretches of a run.

Alverstone forgot his despair, his jealousy, his all, in thinking of the gruesomeness of what he heard. Thus it ever is, and if each individual, when borne down, driven almost distracted by the poignancy of some canker-eating sorrow, would only cast about to find some one less fortunate than himself to whom he could lend a helping hand, he would, ere long, find himself divested of what had been a self-destroying force, and in its stead find a healthy elasticity of mind.

The planning of the murder of an innocent victim—a woman—in a cemetery—over the graves of the dead—it was appalling.

Alverstone could not help think that these breathing organizations behind the tombs from him had been noble men had they been fortunate enough to have been protected in childhood as he had been. Had not these men been born infants! Had not the awful chimeras of racked imagination confronted them! Had not the remorse of memory haunted them! Had they no souls! No doubt, there had been stations of repentance, past which the headlong rushing train had hurled them through space, in which space on every side had seethed and had surged every form of soul-annihilation.

He felt strong pity for the men of whose moral undoing he knew nothing; but he felt great apprehension for that portion of humanity upon which they vented their hatred, born of careless neglect of moral man for his unfortunate brother.

Alverstone was roused from his reverie by a streak of light, which came through the openings.

It had grown dark, and if it had not been for the light, Alverstone would not have seen anything of the

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ruffians on the other side. He ventured to look through, and what he saw would never suffer effacement.

There was a bier-like sepulchre, and the recumbent figure of a woman, long, long since departed, was chiseled upon its top. Like many near by tombs, it was gray, and in many places the smooth surface of the stone was nicked, and when these hollows were on the level surface they were full of water, and in the day time the birds came and drank from them, and sometimes lizards would run through them, but more often these latter came at night. The figure was shrouded and the features were very delicate, and the hands, which met as in prayer, were long and slender. At the base of the sepulchre and extending out from it was a stone pavement. This paved square was not very large, for the adjacent tombs stood very near this particular tomb. These adjacent monuments were all mausoleums, with the exception of one, and they fitted one against the other, as they often do in large burial grounds. The exception was a small tombstone, which faced on another way; but it was so close to the long, bier-like tomb that any one, sacrilegious, could sit on it and rest his arms on the praying figure of the other.

Thus when Alverstone, peering through the long, narrow opening, brought the five men within the circle of his vision, the shrouded, recumbent figure formed the center around which they grouped.

By their attitudes, by their speech and by their motions, the tomb was made to look more like a common billiard table in a low wine shop than like the stone image of a dead body—a holy grave—in sacred grounds.

Each face reflected the viciousness of the soul within, and each glowered and leered upon the other like a savagely carnivorous beast. Only the leader was exempt

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from a share in the portentousness—the overshadowing ill—pent up in the fiery glare of their demonian eyeballs.

The flash light was in the hand of the one who seemed to be a grade higher socially than the others, yet tremblingly inferior to the chief.

Seated upon the small tombstone, and with both arms resting upon the bier, sat the chief—head of the band—doling out gold pieces—the price these lost men were paid for their strength in hardness of nature—natures that knew no emotion but that of rebellion toward their Maker.

He was a tall, well-built man, and worthy the name of chief. His manners would have marked him a man of wealth, though not of elegance. The clothes were not of that fine stuff which distinguishes the raiment of the elegant man of leisure; but they were the novel, chic stuff of the smart, uncouth set. He wore a small derby that was well pushed back, and the height of the forehead made the face attractive. The eyebrows were too highly arched, and the eyes, at this moment, had a fixed glitter, which, by a law-abiding citizen, had been accounted, at the least, annoying. The turn of the mouth was hidden by a heavy mustache; in all, he looked like a very wanton Parisian cockney, who had sprung from the gutters of a great city.

The remaining four were horrible to look at in their rags and tatters. They all wore clothes which evidently had belonged to some one else, and two wore the small cap with the peak, while the rest wore the battered felt hat. Their unhealthy faces would have been pallid if the dirt of many years had not begrimed the skin to such an extent as to make it impossible to tell with exactness to what nationality they belonged.

The face of the lamp-holder was very oval, and the

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sharp, sensitive features marked a man whose unsatiated tastes had made him a moody, dangerous fellow.

The one next to him, and on his right, consequently giving Alverstone an excellent view of his face, went by the name of Germain, and was a very different-looking fellow.

The chief, who had chosen him as the murderer, understood his unsurpassed fitness for any deed requiring brawn, for he was a brawny man, and his arms were large and sinewy, and his face was that of a beast of wildest ferocity.

Alverstone thought that no mercy would ever be shown the victim within the power of this man. He remembered when a child to have spent many hours wrapped in deep contemplation of the young girl imploring Gibbs—the pirate—as shown in "Our First Century," to spare her life; and the face of the terrible tyrant had so impressed him that through all his travels he had recognized the slightest approach to a Gibbs type; for Alverstone's was a very magnetically poised organization, and this Germain was a deeper study in the science of crime than Alverstone had found in the face of Gibbs.

As for the remaining two, they were on the side of the bier next to Alverstone, and, of course, their backs and an occasional side view of their faces as they turned their heads was all that Alverstone could see of them.

The chief looked around at the four eager faces, but kept taking out the glittering gold pieces from a yellow leathern pouch—twenty-franc pieces—and placed them equally in four small columns upon the bier-like tomb in front of him.

Every once in a while a piece would slip and roll. Then one of the eager four would lay his hand over it and try to slip it away, making an altogether pitiful spectacle in his greed to possess the yellow metal, for which



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man has dived and woman has toiled. And the miser and criminal have sold their all, beginning with the greed of gain in childhood, for which they have sold their little friendships of congenial companions, on down the journey till they have found themselves the genteel miser, who gets all his gain for as little expenditure upon his part as possible; or the miser who, hoarding his gains, parts not with even a sufficiency to cleanse his physical being.

The chief saw everything and knew what to expect from the wolfish fiends with whom he dealt. He would growl an awful oath and add some figurative threat, which Alverstone could not understand, but which the ruffians did, and he would glower upon the culprit with an eye so ominous that the miserable greed gave place to maniacal fear, and the piece would be returned.

Strange as it may seem, it is nevertheless true that the more desperate the character, the more terror-inspiring is the fear which seizes when a masterful hand waves the wand of authority.

When the columns of gold were heightened irregularly, the one who thought the small one came to him would cry out, and then when the chief would silence him he would pull out his dagger and examine the blade and look more vicious than ever, thus hoping that his master might think him a dastardly enough villain, to be well paid.

The scene was truly hideous, for the white monuments of the dead—silent monitors of life's fleeting day—contrasted ghastly with the hideousness of the gruesome feast spread by the Apache band gathered about the tomb, upon which, by strange coincidence, lay the marble figure of a maiden, at least a woman of short advance into the realm of womanhood.

The one who held the flash light now moved it so that the direct ray fell through the space between the two

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tombs near Alverstone. He drew back into the gloom, into closer contact with the mausoleums. He looked down to be sure that his feet were not in the beam of light.

But what was that! The flash of something met his eye. Lying very near his feet was something that sparkled and twinkled like a trinket.

With a childlike boldness of forgetfulness, he stooped and picked it up. Though this he accomplished without the slightest noise, and nothing but the motion of the air displaced by his movements in the act of picking it up, yet that was sufficient for the ears of the brigands, trained as they were to listen for retributory steps.

"Some one's about," cried the monotonous voice, in hoarse, whispered words, and instantaneous with the whispered warning the light went out and a deadly silence prevailed. Alverstone held his breath and his heart thumped loudly.

After a stillness of some seconds' duration, enough to insure to the practiced ear that nothing of mortal man was stirring, the chief spoke reassuringly:

"No, it's a lizard running through the grass over there." The light came on again, and it was turned in the direction of the sound.

There, hopping across the gravel-walk, was a harmless toad; but the toad had interfered with the diabolical scheming of hellish fiends; so one swore at the small reptile and kicked it, for even the foul toad fares not well in the haunts of the wicked. What, then, must be the fate of man in those same haunts!

"There, take that," said the big one, who went by the name of Germain, lifting his foot high and digging his heel down upon the harmless toad, out on his evening mission of gathering food—at least to eat or to be eaten. This poor toad, however, had entered the haunts of lost

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man—than which there is none lower, unless it be the haunts of lost woman; and so ended his days of peregrinations in the Cemetery of Montmartre. No doubt, had he been a vain toad he had been proud of his country—the wealthy necropolis, within whose mausoleums lay many of the world's illustrious dead—it is a great city in that great city—the capital of the world—Paris.

Alverstone now had orbicular proof that within this Germain was an energy which would, with delight, crush out the life of some unsuspecting human being within a short time—some little over an hour.

"Where's my money?"

"I gave it to you," responded the chief.

"No, you didn't," cried the irate voice of the one called Anatole.

"Yes, I did," snapped back the chief. "If you want any more money you must get it from the Madame."

"Where is she? She'll die or give me more," and his words came hard through tightly shut teeth.

"I don't know. She went off in that direction," answered the chief, indicating by a motion the direction of the tombs behind which Alverstone was concealed.

"Oh, you can't get her," laughed René. "She left before we came up. Wasn't that she with the long black cloak?"

"Yes," answered Germain, through a grin. He was obviously very much pleased with what he had got, and stood patting a wallet between his two palms and glaring around at the others like an incarnate fiend.

"I'll go after her," cried Anatole. "See if she'll get off so easy. I'll get her jewels if she hasn't any money on her," and he sprang forward, following the impulse to exact more.

"You're a fool, Anatole," sneered Germain. "Don't you know the gates are shut?"

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Alverstone almost gasped. A new sensation seized upon him. Was it true? Were the gates closed? Was he locked in here? This Apache most likely knew what he said, and Alverstone knew enough of Parisian burial grounds to know that when the gates were closed there was no way of exit, for there was a high wall running around the entire necropolis.

But how could these ruffians get out? They were to commit their murder in a short time, and it was to be in the Bois, so, of course, they must have some secret mode of exit. Perhaps some movable stone in the high wall might bear a secret mark to them, by means of the removal of which stone they would be afforded a large enough opening to pass their lithe bodies through; and most likely in their case they would not replace the stone, and Alverstone could go out after them. He shrank from the thought of following such men, and for the purpose of availing himself of their mode of clandestine departure from this city of the dead.

No superstitious fear of spending a night in a cemetery confronted him, but he was disturbed to the point of distraction as to his duty regarding the safety of the life he knew was in jeopardy, and which he knew would be cut short unless he was able to inform the police.

"It's getting along, isn't it?" said one brigand.

"Just five now," answered another.

"Have to be hurrying up," piped René, "if we're to be there in half an hour."

Germain glowered at René, and called him, among a lot of oaths and low slang, a "milksop," or its equivalent, because René had a natural pallor.

"René, sharpen your knife well, for if she struggles much, you know you're to help me to the finish." Germain instinctively knew that René suffered whenever allusion to the moment of action was made, so Germain

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purposely thrust it at him whenever he saw the occasional cringe in the face of René. The unearthly pallor of René's face had given way to a deadly greenish cast, and Alverstone was glad to see that beneath this frightful exterior was a spark of manhood which revolted at the bloody jest.

At mention of the knife a spark of light had appeared amid the darkness of that benighted soul, and Alverstone's sympathy went out to the man, who sat among that band, a butt of their jibes, because of the atom of true manhood within his sin-tossed soul, which would not down at his bidding, but which would rise to torment him in his lost surroundings and plead with him for a return to fields of light, where he was sure to have a conscience, void of offense—where he might be useful to his fellow-men—where he might be happy in a well-spent life, even though that life were a ceaseless struggle for existence.

"Is this all you're going to get?" asked Anatole, with a sneer, of their chief.

"No, this is only half of our pay. She wouldn't give me more until it's done."

"Ha! ha!" laughed René, while a sad light crossed his otherwise placid face. "You'll never see her again. She knows her work will be done, and she'll be far from here when it's over."

"What's that?" cried the chief. "Not get more? Indeed I will, or else I'll steal her child and hold him for ransom."

"Oh, so you know her?" mocked Anatole, questioningly.

"Of course, I know her," retorted the angered voice of the chief, for he felt insulted at the remarks of his underlings. "Do you think I undertake deeds of this order for unknown persons?"

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"Oh! I didn't know," replied Anatole, scoffingly.

"Who is she?" asked the light-holder, turning the light towards himself and looking, with perfect quietude and without flinching a muscle, into the glaring light, as one would have done when clipping a burnt wick with a snuffer.

At mention by the chief of the name required in the answer to the question put, Alverstone for an instant felt himself petrified, but he failed not himself in this stern hour. He leaned against the tomb at his back and mentally repeated the name pronounced by the chief, to see if possible whether he had heard aright.

Alverstone clinched his hands so tightly that the small stones in the trinket he had picked up dug into the flesh of his right palm, and involuntarily, more than voluntarily, he opened his hand. The light diffused from the small beam that came through the narrow space, fell full on his open hand, and the small trinket glittered.

What was it? Alverstone started and would have ejaculated had he not been a more cautious man. As it was, he almost forgot the gang on the other side of the mausoleums. And he stared long and hard at the dazzling jewel in his open palm.

The blood surged to his head. His brain swam. It was his very own!—the one his mother had given him—just one year before she died. And who had taken it from him?—who? Had he forgotten the night when the moon dipped her silver bow near the horizon?—where there were many planets and more stars?—in a far-off country, where the gentle wind was warm and languorous? And who had walked beside him on that night? Who had taken from him the dearest treasure he possessed—this locket—the gift of his sainted mother? Never again would any one touch this keepsake, and he pressed it to his lips in a passionate sadness, for he had

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loved his mother devotedly, and her memory was a sacred thing.

Alverstone had hoped that the Apache leader had mistaken the name of the person, but now it was quite clear to his mind. This woman, whom he had seen as he had come up the terrace, must, then, have just left the Apache chief.

She had dropped the charm here, but she had thought it was in the valley. The cloaked figure which had been searching for something in the grass when he had mounted the terrace; and the person who, last night near midnight—on a little street that adjoins the Boulevard des Capucines—had parted company from another, who had said, "As strong as possible;" and the instigator of this murder, in a short time to be perpetrated at the willow pool in the lonely Bois; and the one who had taken this locket from him, were all the same—the same woman. His mouth fell open—his senses were staggered—he could not pronounce the name. He knew it was an absurd thought, but it was so. Did he not know that walk? How blind he had been! But, then, who would have suspected? Many thoughts rushed confusedly through his brain.

The small light went out, and Alverstone heard the chief ask:

"Have you got your spurs fast?" Then there was a click as something metal fell on the stone pavement, and Alverstone heard the harsh voice of Anatole cry out: "Turn on the light. I've lost my spur."

Then the light came on, and he could see them again. They were sitting on the sepulchre, tightening very sharp spurs; but he could not see the light-holder and the chief. René was declaring that his spurs would take him over a wall many times higher than the cemetery wall. By this Alverstone knew they meant to scale the wall of the

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cemetery, and for that purpose were now making sure of their spurs. He felt a weakness seize him. He knew he could never climb this wall; he was powerless.

"Where are you going to climb?" asked the light-holder.

"Past the Tunnel," answered the chief.

"Then, we can go down right here," remarked Germain.

"Yes, just around that stone, back of us," piped the thin voice of René, and he indicated the mausoleum against which Alverstone had flattened himself as best he could. "There is a path there that goes down to the Avenue."

Alverstone hoped that they would put out their light before they came around the mausoleum; but with all this fear he was glad that he had heard how to gain the entrance, for the mention of the avenue that could be gained by going down a path had recalled to Alverstone's mind the broad, white way which he had followed for some time after entering the cemetery. Though he could not remember the way he had turned, he knew that he was on a hill, and that there was a valley somewhere below. He had learned from these Apaches that in the valley was an avenue, and if this avenue proved to be the wide way he had followed on first entering, he remembered that the viaduct stretched almost directly over one end of this particular avenue. There were lights on this viaduct, and by means of these he could easily gain the entrance, which was very near the end of this elevated road.

Alverstone had been in this cemetery but once before in his life, and that had been when his tutor had taken him to visit the burial grounds of Paris. He was then but a child of fourteen, and so now knew little of the plan of the cemetery. He determined to try, if possible,



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in this Stygian darkness, to see what direction down the terrace these ruffians might take.

The mausoleums around him were so close to one another that to grope one's way around them and to keep one's bearings would be well-nigh impossible. Besides, this terraced slope was long and descended gently to the foot of the hill. And Alverstone felt sure that if these Apaches had not mentioned this path he could not hope to pick his way down the terrace.

The light went out, and Alverstone could feel the pressure of air as the gang rounded the side of the mausoleum.

They passed him, and, though they disappeared like mice when the cat appears—quickly and softly—the high tension to which he had been strung made him keenly alive to the sound of the soft pressure of the tender grass beneath their departing footfalls.

Alverstone strained hard, but the figures were soon undiscernible in the blackness of the night. Then he heard the high, piping voice of René say:

"The path is rather twisted. If you don't follow me you'll get lost."

Alverstone felt the cold perspiration stand out and bead all over him. If these other four could not have found their way down the terrace without René as guide, what could he do? His last hope was crushed. He was doomed to be locked up in the cemetery all night, and this gruesome deed would be accomplished.

Soon he was left alone in the silence and in the darkness. The white sepulchres rose from the black ground like monitors, for amid those of many colors some were white and were discernible in the thickest darkness. The earth was covered as with a pall, and the heavy clouds pressed their inky blackness above and around him. The wind had started to blow cold, but Alverstone stood where he was, motionless.

## CHAPTER XX.

Julia Pembroke was standing before her wardrobe, in the boudoir, buttoning a pair of long white gloves which she had just drawn on.

Her position was such that her reflected self showed in profile in the full-length mirror, which covered the entire front of the wardrobe. She was dressed and ready for the drive to the Trent's place, though as yet it was some time before the hour which she had named as the time for the arrival of Madame Cinati's carriage, in which she would go there. The dinner was not until six, and she had yet quite a while to wait. Julia had started to dress quite early, for since she had met Alverstone on the Boulevard Haussmann the time had seemed long and wearisome, and she had really suffered, even though she had tried to interest herself in learning rôles; so she had gladly turned to the distraction of dressing much earlier than would have been necessary.

She was pleased to contemplate the result of this dressing, but before the joy of that admiration which to a beautiful woman is a world of joy, there crept in that peculiar annoyance, which had its birth in the unkind notice given her by that one whom, of all her acquaintances, she held in highest regard—Hampton Alverstone.

What could it mean! The room in which she stood was well lighted, and on some of the chairs were many articles of clothing, while upon her dressing table were to be seen many accessories of a lady's toilet, and all in great disorder—a veritable pandemonium prevailing throughout the atmosphere of the room.

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To one acquainted with the personal habits of Julia Pembroke it was certain that she could not be in her usual state of mind, for, unlike most persons of strictly cleanly habits, she added to the virtue of cleanliness that other—its twin-sister—orderliness.

Her face just now was sad. She fastened the last button of the glove which she was buttoning, then pushed back from her left wrist, well up on her arm toward the elbow, the bracelet given her by Madame Nitolsk. She stretched out her arm and looked at the bracelet from this side and from that, and smiled an evident satisfaction at its beauty and its fitness upon her shapely arm. The sparkling of the precious stones pleased her and she stood quite still for some moments, and watched the play of the fascinating colors reflected from them.

Her face almost lost its sadness, and there was something infantile in the smile which played around her mouth. Then her face grew thoughtful, for she was thinking of the difference between the gift of a child of the opulent but dreamy East and that of a child of the affluent but sturdily stern West.

Then she thought of the generosity of spirit which had prompted Madame Nitolsk to make the present. "So kind, so very kind in a woman of her place in the world to think of me in this fashion, and she seems genuine in her profession of good feeling for me. I am certainly fortunate in meeting her—at least, no harm can ever come from our acquaintanceship."

Then she looked again at the Julia in the mirror, while inclining her head and waist toward the glass. There was reflected a front view of her face, a three-quarter view of her shoulders and chest and an almost side view of her waist and skirt. In this pose she saw the beautifully developed and powerful chest to the neat waist and incredibly small hips, giving the impression of

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great strength of vocal powers, when the contatrice should draw upon this reserve power for the execution of some musical phrase.

The beautifully poised neck, such as any queen might look upon with envy, was seen and noted by Julia, and the gently sloping shoulders, in perfect symmetry with the other portions of the body, made her alive to the keen delight a woman always feels in a survey of that form, which, of all created things, was pronounced the fairest. She saw and knew that she—Julia Pembroke—had developed into a form of striking beauty. She could not help seeing this if she looked at all into her mirror.

Madame Nitolsk was not so beautiful as was she. That was certainly true. Alverstone might be pleased with Madame Nitolsk's style of beauty, but she felt quite sure he must be far more pleased with the beauty of her own type. However, it was certain, she thought, that a beautiful or even a handsome widow is at all times a dangerous rival for place of precedence in man's esteem; yet the beautiful woman in her mirror smiled at her most reassuringly, and Julia was pacified, was at rest, on that point.

Overwhelmingly powerful, though, came the fierce thought, why had he so cruelly shot that relentless glance at her, just in front of Maestro Novara's, and a few moments before had shown her intentional slight—and this, too, when she was just then in a state of bliss at remembrance of the hour, on Christmas eve—she was sure he must have seen her begin to smile her happy greeting—"Oh! pshaw!" she exclaimed; "I will not think of Hampton Alverstone in this fashion—he is far from me. In the Madeleine I settled that forever, and to linger in the mystifying atmosphere is simply to confess a desire to throw aside the career for which I have an unextinguishable longing.

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"No," and she stamped her foot as she crossed the room and looked out through the lace curtains covering the window. She turned her head and looked at her little clock on the mantel. It was not time yet for the carriage. She turned and walked back toward the mirror, in which she had an entire view of herself, and when some few feet from it she paused and started to sing the last portion of the *Queen Margherita's* aria in the second act of "Gli Ugonotti," at the same time taking up her fan, which hung from a long, delicate gold chain around her neck, and fanning with the fascinating movement which she had seen the incomparable Madame Sembrich give to her fan during her singing of this same aria.

After the first few notes were thrown out upon the stillness of her quiet surroundings, her mood changed. All thoughts of Hampton Alverstone were gone, and she was singing as only a great lyric soprano can sing when under the inspiration of truth to the moving spirit of her being—the spirit of song.

On and on she sang, every note sending delight to her soul, for, despite the indisposition from the last night's experience, she was singing gloriously, and she knew it, and she was pleased accordingly—pleased with herself—pleased with her song. On she sped, happy as the feathered songstress in its most thrilling roundelay, and until—yes, until she reached a note much sweeter, much more touching than those gone before.

She had listened to each note, as was her habit, but what was this which startled her into self-consciousness!

The fan ceased its motion, and as she slowly, softly descended the irregular grupettos the melody began to speak. She repeated the lingering words "*D'amore favella*"—of the tender phrase, then on again, though now rather hesitatingly—"*La terra, il cielo d'amore favell*"—

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That the meaning of the words now struck at her heart's burden was plainly visible upon her face, but she sang on. Though faintly and half absently, she took the notes—"*favella d' amore*"—taking the high B and slowly descending the octave on the last word. The fan dropped from the limp fingers and the hand fell heavily against her side.

The voice ceased its singing, the head drooped and she looked thoughtfully at the floor. While Julia had been singing a persistent diminuendo had stolen the notes to a forte pianissimo, until as "*d'amore*" was taken on the high B and slowly followed down the scale, the notes became only a sighing tune, whispered in sound, and then all music ceased, and that same half word and the word, "*d'amore*," were repeated slowly and far down in a clear voice.

A deep, subtle tone of an understanding heart vibrated each syllable. She listened, for the heart was speaking and the mind was grasping what the heart said.

Julia knew the Italian like her mother tongue, and,

*"Ah questa voce sola  
Natura par più bella,  
La terra, l'aura, il ciel  
D'amor favella,"*

did not mean a graceful connection of pretty sounding words, but the expression of the sentiment contained in the words,

*"To this voice alone  
Does all nature respond,  
Heaven, ether and earth,  
All speak of love."*

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The meaning of this song came in upon her most forcibly—its import, how it swayed the world, and this same sentiment was that which she had struggled to crush under foot and was still struggling to keep down.

The hot blood mounted to her face and she grew sick, but she did not change her gaze from the floor; she was thinking that she was certainly weak to allow this aria so to disturb her, when she had joyously begun the singing of it—singing, that she might fill her mind with her beloved work and forget the man around whom now centered the sentiments of this beautiful aria of Meyerbeer's "Ugonotti"; but she soon smiled faintly, for, thought she, "Am I not true to nature, in that I love this man?" She answered the interrogation herself: "Yes, I am true to the nature of my being, and I am sure—quite sure—that it will be very difficult for me to cast away the love Hampton Alverstone has inspired within me. Yes, I love Hampton Alverstone, but my song shall more than compensate for this loss."

A soft tapping at the door roused her from her reverie, which she finished with the thought: "I now crush out that love completely; at least, I shall crush out the disposition to entertain thoughts of him whom I love so passionately. But after one has loved as I love Hampton Alverstone, to forget is not so easy; in fact, I can not forget him."

"Ah! Mademoiselle, the carriage is at the door," said the concierge, at whose knock Julia had opened the door. "Can I help you in any way?"

"Yes," replied Julia; "come in and put on my cloak, please." And, going into the boudoir, she signified the cloak she meant to wear with, "There, on that chair yonder, is my cloak, Marguerite."

The concierge bent to take up the lovely creation, but instead lifted her hands in a surprised exclamation,

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as she said: "How beautiful! how beautiful!" This cloak the concierge had not before seen, and she could not repress her delight at sight of it, for it had only been this morning that Julia had received it from Madame Cinati as her Christmas present. It was very beautiful, fashioned without sleeves, and falling from the shoulders with a bell-flare to the bottom of her dress. The high, rolling collar was of the richest quality of chinchilla, while down the front and around the bottom was a broad band of the same handsome fur. It was of a rose-colored stuff, that had a silken sheen, while the lining was brocaded and matched in color the fur trimming.

When it was adjusted Julia stepped back so that the light from the electrolier fell full upon her.

The concierge clasped her hands in admiration, saying: "Oh! Mademoiselle! Mademoiselle! you are very beautiful."

"You mean my cloak is beautiful," Julia made answer, good-humoredly, for she herself was truly pleased with the charming creature reflected from the mirror across the way, and Julia did appear extraordinarily beautiful on this particular evening. The rose of the cloak gave color to her face, which was a little pale from the illness of last night.

The soft, white *crêpe de Chine* dress was the same which she had worn Tuesday night at the Trent reception. The same short string of pearls was around her neck. The hair was softly parted and done low at the back of the neck, where a single rose of the shade of her cloak nestled. Her bearing was regal, and the expression of the face, though pleased with her appearance, yet showed signs of the late heart struggle, and gave a slight sadness to the otherwise lovely face.

When Julia stepped out of the house she had to go up a trifle, for the carriage had not stopped directly in front



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of the entrance, as was its custom, but she remarked nothing upon this departure from the usual. She was young and strong and happy, and, best of all, sensible—not at all a slave to the fastidiousness of fashion—and so, without the slightest protestation for their remissness of duty, she went up to where the carriage stood, shaded from the glare of the strong light thrown out of the lighted hall. The stars were just beginning to peek out, and the heavy clouds were chasing themselves, so that an hour, in all probability, would see the sky cloudless.

The silver mountings on the harness flashed in the semi-darkness, while the horses themselves chafed restlessly at their bits and nervously lifted and stamped their beautiful feet.

The livery of the attendants was perfect—one, whip and reins in hand and perched erect, upon the high box; the other, standing beside the carriage door, waiting until Mademoiselle should make her appearance, when he would open the door for her entrance.

Taken in its entirety, the gay city of Paris furnished no handsomer turn-out than that of Madame Cinati, and when the fair creature, wrapped in the rose-colored mantle, rested her foot on the step, preparatory to entering the carriage, the sight was infinitely more pleasing; and as she inclined forward the light from within the carriage fell upon the small, imperially formed crown of her head, and farther down, upon the soft folds of the cloak. The reflection of the lightened sheen of the rose silk met and mingled with the reflections of the burnished gold of her hair, and, of course, there were shadows too.

Then the door closed and the carriage rolled quickly away and was soon rounding the Arc de Triomphe. The hoofs of the horses sounded as soft as the hoofs of chased deer that run over a stony way, for the pavement was the wooden pavement of Paris, and this dull roar

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was the well-bred voice of the city—the gentle, half-toned voice of aristocratic Paris.

Julia thought the servants kind, indeed, to have been so thoughtful of her wishes, for they had drawn across the silk curtains that she might be in the enjoyment of strictest privacy. She had never required this service at their hand, and she could not but notice it, and consider it as an especial kindness shown her; for she knew they were proud of their carriage and its occupants, and would have preferred the interior shown through draped curtains, than to have secreted the prettiness within by drawn curtains.

Julia Pembroke was alone with happy thoughts. The distance from her apartment to the mansion on the Champs Elysées was not great, and after riding some time she thought they must certainly soon arrive there. She leaned forward and to one side, pushed back the little silk hanging before the window to look out and judge by some well-known point along the avenue just where she was, when—Oh! horrors! had she suddenly gone blind? What was this Stygian blackness that met her searching eye? No, she was not blind, for she could see, as usual, by the inside light of the carriage. She grasped hard at the curtain and strained to see in the darkness, but not a ray of light anywhere was to be seen. Where was she? She listened; they were on ground now, and not on the wooden pavement of Champs Elysées Avenue. She had been too preoccupied to notice when they had left the pavements. At first a slight fear seized her, but she quickly dismissed it with the thought that the footman had mistaken her order. She dropped the curtain and called through the speaking tube: "Footman!"

"*Oui, Madame,*" came, in answer, back through the tube.

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"The order was to the Prince de Loire's, on the Champs Elysées," and Julia's accents were commanding; but she was already frightened, for his voice, though distorted, as voices always are through trumpets, did not sound to her like that of Madame Cinati's footman.

"He! ha!" came through the tube, in answer, and with a sharp crack of a whip the carriage lunged forward, as the horses dashed off under the cutting blow.

"We'll go some place else now," came to her, in the thin, high voice of the footman. "You need not cry out—no help can reach you—we are in the depths of the Bois. So be still, my pretty one."

At this intelligence Julia sat stiffly upright and stared wildly for some moments. In the Bois! What! Oh! What could this mean! Surely, some great mistake—or could it be that the servants of Madame Cinati would be guilty of an irregularity! No, no, that could never be!

She recalled now that she had not noticed the carriage and servants, for, as was her custom, she had given the number of the Trents to the footman without so much as a glance at him, and, though all had struck her as the carriage and servants of Madame Cinati, yet now she realized that she might have been mistaken; and, too, she recalled that they had not been standing in front of the door of her apartment house, yet she had not felt the slightest suspicion of an irregularity. Could it be that she had taken a carriage meant for some one else? No, that were not to be considered at all, for the footman had rung at the lodge door and had given the concierge orders to tell her that the carriage was waiting, and when she had come out of the street door there was no other carriage in sight, and this one surely was Madame Cinati's; for, had it not been hers, there would have been something unfamiliar to arrest her attention—and she recalled the exact pose of the coachman and

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his very characteristically peculiar perch upon the box—all had appeared as should be. How could a mistake occur? She herself had told the footman, when he had left her in the afternoon, that she would want the carriage at this hour, and this carriage had come at the exact time and had called for her.

A hundred such thoughts flitted through her brain in a whirl. Julia did not know that a telephonic message countermanding the order she had given had gone to the stables of Madame Cinati just when the horses were harnessing to serve her. And this message had been to the effect that she would require no carriage that evening. Then, as a further assurance that she had not taken a wrong carriage, at least one waiting for some one else, she looked around for the little mirror, when, lo! no mirror, nor place for one, was to be seen.

Oh! horrors! Now she felt certain that some foul deed was perpetrating. Her head reeled and she felt faint, but she drew herself together again and demanded in as stentorian tones as her voice would permit:

"Footman, who are you? Answer me at once. Who are you?"

After a short silence, the only answer was a blood-curdling "Ha! ha! ha!" sent in through the speaking tube.

"Oh! do tell me what this all means! I plead with you, tell me, tell me! tell me!" cried Julia, distractedly.

But the heart of the man was not touched.

"Save me!" called Julia, through the tube. "Save me, for the sake of your mother, and I will make you all so rich that you will never again do this for money."

"We're hired to take you this ride, and we never fail to finish the job we begin," was the reply made to her offer.

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She turned and pulled wildly at the doors, but they did not open; they were securely fastened. She then pounded on the glass, crying:

"Help! help! help!" But no help came, and the horses did not stop. Instead, they dashed on at a furiously dizzying rate of speed.

Again came in through the speaking tube: "Keep quiet, my dame. You're too noisy. You're safe in our keeping, and there you'll stay till we send you to —."

Perhaps they meant to kill her! How horrible to die so young! Something clutched at her heart. Why could not some one help her? Where was she going? She was in the lonely Bois and at night! Hope fled for an instant and she sat paralyzed with terror. Suddenly through this appalling darkness shone a ray of light. It was a very faint ray to one so nervously overwrought, nevertheless, it was sufficient to penetrate the diabolical blackness at this moment surrounding her, and with sweet insistence it entered her soul, for it shone with a steady light, and she had fixed her soul's eye upon it. It was a gleam from that far-off star beneath whose influence she had spent the first seven years of her life.

Who was that speaking? Surely, she heard a loving voice say: "Julia Pembroke, never forget to pray to God." She listened, understood and obeyed. She sent out and up an agonizing prayer for deliverance from the evil into which she had fallen, and which threatened her with dire calamity—perhaps with death.

The sudden relaxing by her trustful prayer of the severe tension her nervous organization had suffered from the awful fright of the past few minutes, brought about that peculiar condition—a form of faint—in which she was able to hear, feel and understand all which transpired around her, but in which she was denied the sense of sight and the power of speech—not able to give

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forth even a weakest moan. Nor was she left the power of motion sufficient to make the slightest movement.

The carriage stopped abruptly and the door was opened from without. She felt two strong arms lay hold on her and lift her out of the carriage. There was a great noise and confusion on every side, and she heard a man's voice speaking loudly and hurriedly, but her mind was confused, and she could not understand what he said.

The sense of sight had returned, and she looked up and saw that the man who held her had on a battered felt hat, and that his clothes were ragged and that he presented a wretchedly degraded appearance.

This man, she thought, was to kill her. She was too weak to struggle, though she had recovered from her faint enough to gasp and feebly cry:

"Mercy—mercy! I beg of you do not kill me!"

No attention was given to her beseechment, for the mind of this taterdemalion was discordant with sounds of a fierce time just at hand, and she was carried to some distance, where he put her down upon the wet grass.

Great trees loomed up in the darkness about her. She looked up and saw a patch of sky above her, and in it were many stars, and these renewed the strain of hope, through faith in sincere trust in a protecting Providence. But whence could help come now? It was plain that this was the end of life for her. Then a band of light came before her eyes; she felt blinded. Her eyes closed, for the light was dazzling, and she could see nothing around. She wondered if she were dead and if this brightness was of the other world!

"Julia!" She heard her name exclaimed. "My God! it is Julia!"

Her head had fallen back, and a little to one side, so, as she opened her eyes, when her name was pronounced

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the bright flash light did not fall upon her face, but straight upon the face bending over her.

"Hampton!" Julia gasped, hoarsely; for it was Hampton Alverstone who bent over her, and his strong arms were now about her in a quick, protecting enfoldment; for she was again losing consciousness, and this time life was a blank—an utter blank.

Alverstone lifted her up and carried her away from where he had found her to some distance off, out of sight of this spot; and he did not slacken his pace until he turned a second corner and a green light, a few paces ahead, lit up a pending board, on which could be read the number 12367.

As he came nearer, the shape of an automobile was discernible in the darkness. Obviously, every precaution for concealment had been taken. The headlight had been hooded, and no light, save the small green one on the back, could be seen, as the car loomed up in the open—in the depths of that historic old forest—the Bois de Boulogne.

As Alverstone, with Julia still in his arms, raised his foot to step into his automobile, the chauffeur having opened the door, when he heard his master approaching, a bullet whizzed over his head.

"Look out!" cried a voice in loud, shrill tones, and in the direction from which Alverstone had just come. Then, following the voice, came a second bullet, but closer than had the first, and there was the near report of a revolver, which could not be far off.

Alverstone understood and called back in a loud, steady voice: "All right!" then stepped into the automobile and put Julia upon the seat and tenderly wrapped her cloak about her. He stood up, breathing quickly, for it was necessary to get his breath before attempting to speak.

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The curtains were drawn, as had been those of the carriage in which she had been spirited to the Bois; but for what a different purpose! Those for diabolical purposes, these for purposes of delicacy.

Julia had now fully recovered consciousness, for the report of the revolver had aroused her.

Just as Alverstone turned on the electric light the man in tatters and with the hat battered, came up. Julia saw him and she recoiled in fright, for she thought him to be an Apache—the one who had taken her from the carriage, and whom she had supposed was about to kill her at the time that Alverstone had rescued her; but she quickly saw her mistake, for Alverstone smiled a cordial greeting and stepped down from the motor car, and a few steps to the left of the door, where he stood while speaking with the man.

"Are you going to take charge of the young lady?" he asked.

"Yes," replied Alverstone; "she is a friend of mine."

Julia could hear distinctly what they were saying, but she could not see the man longer, while she had a side view of Alverstone.

"I shall see her home, at once."

"Ah, very well," replied the man.

"Were any of you hurt?" It was Alverstone who asked the question.

"No, fortunately; but it was a close call."

"Did any get away?"

"None that we have seen. We have three fast, handcuffed and in our car, yonder."

"From what I heard in the cemetery I don't think there were any others," said Alverstone.

"But," replied the stranger, "it is best to be on guard. No telling who these fellows may have standing somewhere behind a tree on the way out."



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"Do these fellows say anything?" interrupted Alverstone.

"No, not a word; all silent as the rocks. These men are only the tools of some one rich—very rich, too. They do not work for nothing; especially are they well paid for work of this sort."

Then they went on more hurriedly than at first, and Julia gave no further heed to them. She was safe now and, dismissing all fear, she began to revolve within her mind if perchance she could find therein aught that might disclose to her the name of one who could possibly entertain for her a spirit of hatred strong enough to lead to a deed of this nature. But, try as she would, she could find no such one. She knew not one in all the world whose treatment of her could justify a suspicion as perpetrator of this dastardly attempt. Then there was that other question, fully as unanswerable as the one just left: "How came Alverstone to be here? How had he come to know of this?" It pleased her to think that he had rescued her from danger, and that in the Bois—the historic woods known for centuries as the place of deeds of darkest hue. It awakened the romantic within her, which, expressed or suppressed, lies within the bosom of every human being.

Yes, truly he was a knight, and as real a one as ever galloped to the rescue of a fair lady. She was the lady in a beautiful fairy tale, and Alverstone was the handsome, brave knight, who had come to rescue her, and who did rescue her, and in as brave a manner as did the knight of the good times olden. And now he was shielding her in his motor car, which for magnificence far surpassed the superlative degree of the imagination of the fairy godmother, who always furnished the means of transportation for the return home of all knightly rescues.

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Julia might be pardoned for this bit of imagery, for the reactionary force was great indeed, well-nigh enough to unbalance the mind of one not so well poised mentally.

In less than an hour before she had been riding with what had been her murderers—demons of the fairy tale—but for the timely arrival of her knight, with whom she was now riding quietly and in a delirium of joy.

She was awakened from her sweet love dream by:

“Good-night, Monsieur Alverstone,” and the response:

“Good-night, Monsieur le police.”

Then Alverstone turned to the chauffeur and gave the number of Julia’s house, after which he stepped into the automobile and it rolled away quickly and quietly; and the fairy godmother of centuries past gazed in wondering awe at the speedy flight of the thing her chariot could not equal in its swiftest flight.

They looked at each other for a moment in silence, then Julia spoke:

“Oh! you are so good, so kind, so noble, to save me from what was surely the end of life for me! I have no words in which to express my deep sense of gratitude for this heroic devotion to me.”

Alverstone made no reply.

“You think these men intended to kill me, do you not?” again put Julia.

Again no verbal reply, but he shook his head in assent, while his deep-souled eyes rested upon her with a gaze that was almost stern in its steadiness.

“Oh! what is the matter, Hampton? I see you are angry with me, and you came not to save me, not for love’s sake, but as a duty.”

“Julia—I mean Miss Pembroke”—

“Oh! do not call me Miss; call me as you did last night at the Madeleine.” She leaned forward, and, taking his hand, held it tensely, continuing: “You are my savior

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from this horror; you are my avowed lover, and I love you as well. Then why not call me Julia? We are good Americans and fully understand each other."

"Ah! if we only did," was Alverstone's reply, half moaned. Then he resumed his stern, set gaze.

"Tell me! tell me! all you know!"

Julia had grown so demonstrative that Alverstone questioned the advisability of complying with her request; but finally, in a few brief sentences, told her the gist of the entire happenings from his sudden contact with the Apache band in the cemetery to the moment when he recognized her here in the Bois. How, after the departure of the Apaches, he had groped his way about in the darkness, trying to find his way out of the cemetery, but without success, and had given up in despair, when, suddenly, gleaming far off in the distance, he had seen a light, which had proven to be a light on the viaduct, and with it as a guide he had regained his bearings and had reached the elevated way and soon had been at the gate—the entrance to Montmartre Cemetery; how that gate had been locked for the night, but that the keeper had been inside, where he chanced to be arguing the pros and cons of a question at issue in the coming election; and, after a severe reprimand for not obeying the summons of the closing bell, the gate had been opened and he had then rushed to the police; and how they had reached the place appointed by the Apaches, and from their ambush the police had taken the one sent to commit the deed, and then how one policeman had disguised himself by putting on the clothes of the Apache just arrested, when the carriage with her in it had come to a stand, as preconcerted; and that was all, for now she was safe, and would soon be in the quiet and security of her apartment.

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He told all, simply and without impulsive accent, for he had never wished to appear the hero.

"Oh! no, I am not safe; surely an impending doom hangs over me, for only last night some woman, in a long cloak, put flowers in my room while I was at the Madeleine, and in the night I was taken ill—very ill—and Madame Cinati thinks the roses caused my illness. She sent them for chemical examination, and had she not been in Paris, in all probability I should have died from their noxiousness."

Alverstone was horrified at this disclosure, and instantly understood the meaning of the words: "As strong as possible."

He realized that for Julia's safety he must tell her of this secret movement against her; but he would not do so now. He would speak to her of it to-morrow. She would be safe until then. She went on and told him all—how the Trents had taken her to the station to see Madame Cinati leave on the noon train, and afterwards had gone on through the Bois, for the purpose of restoring her to her normal self, as Lady Trent had expressed it.

Alverstone's face grew ashen.

"Are you ill?" asked Julia, in feverish anxiety.

"No, Julia, I am not. I was unkind—I was cruel. I saw you with the Trents in the Bois, but you did not see me."

"Ah!" she said, tenderly, lovingly; "and you were jealous."

This was a question.

"Yes, Julia; madly, insanely jealous."

"Now, now, my dear; did I not tell you that I loved no one but Hampton Alverstone?"

"Yes, I know," he replied.

"And that I would marry no one but Hampton Alverstone, if ever I married?" she continued.

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"Yes, Julia, you did; but true love is always jealous. How can it be otherwise? It is all very well to see those held dear to us, as Brutus held his Portia—his right, his honorable wife—enjoying a pleasant time with others of the opposite sex; but it is not in nature that true love views, without a pang, the loved one on the heights in loves other than his own."

"Yes, yes, I see, I understand you, Hampton; I understand you fully. But I meant no coquetry, and I am sorry, indeed, if I caused you pain; but it seems you might trust me a little more fully than this."

She paused, and they were silent for some little time. Julia, mentally questioning whether she should tell him that he had seen her chatting thus gayly with her cousin, Reginald Trent, and not with Lieutenant Trent, a comparative stranger—one whom she had known but a few days. But no, she would not tell him; she would let Lady Trent tell him.

Perhaps Julia foresaw the unhappy result of the introduction of so startling a bit of news into the tête-à-tête which had brought about this happy dénouement—this blissful state of soulful love, which now threatened destruction of Maestro Novara's hopes for the future of his art—that future when his American singer, as he frequently called Julia, would startle the world in fulfillment of his prophecy—his prophecy, when he had read the musical signs which foretold the appearance of the greatest lyric soprano the world had ever had.

To Alverstone, sitting across from her and looking intently into her face, she was lovelier than he had yet seen her. She wore the same soft, white dress; the same kind of rose, as sole ornament in the spun gold hair, nestled as artistically as on the evening at the Trent *soirée*. But her beauty had changed. Her eyes were not the same as on that evening, for they regarded

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him with a far different light. And it was love—true love—for him, which lit them and which gave them the beauteousness that filled his soul to the uttermost with trust, with peace, with joy unspeakable.

At last Alverstone spoke: "Julia, you love me; I know you do, and that, too fondly to be happy without me in your life. We love each other equally well—this I know and this you know—for we are sincere of purpose in life, and neither of us would think of trifling for the sake of an unworthy notion—a flirtation. Did you feel the slightest indifference for me I would not urge my suit, but you do not. On the contrary, I know you can never be truly happy without me in your life. You do love me, and the lover can never forget the one truly loved—never, Julia; it is impossible to forget—there is no refuge from this but in full requitment. May I hope for your reply in the affirmative?"

While speaking he had been holding a hand in each of his, and now he clasped them, palms together, within the clasp of his own, and in this devotional clasp he placed the four hands over his heart, saying "As our hands have joined, let us join our hearts."

"I am thine, always," said Julia, in a quiet, steady, sincere and tender voice, and with not a shade of regret vibrating it. "I give up my cherished career as a singer, and with not a regret. I am glad, happy, proud to become the bride of Hampton Alverstone."

Then he bowed his head beside the four hands, still tightly clasped above his heart—his heart, now attuned to heaven's sweetest musical theme, and which thrilled his soul with a symphony, the divinest ever inspired—The Symphony of Love—for love has its adagio, its allegro, its andante, its scherzo, its trio and its finale.

He was willing to have suffered all this anguish—all this torment, since he had abruptly turned his horse at

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the end of the street where he had seen Julia and Trent together in front of Signor Novara's, to have saved this life, so precious to him. It had been a mad rage of jealousy, he thought, that had led him at so dark an hour into that unseemly quarter; that had made him turn into the cemetery, where he had heard those Apaches, and where he had learned to know from the mouth of the leader the name of the instigator of this terrible plot, the consummation of whose perpetration he himself had been able to foil. But this noble American man was like the half of the world which is ignorant of what the other half is doing, ignorant that the actions of one half the world often rules the destinies of the other half.

When Hampton Alverstone had left his horse at the stables and had started to walk blindly—to walk without an objective point—there knelt, down deep in a dungeon, a priest, who was praying in an agony like unto that of Gethsemane—praying thus intensely and thus suffering, for protecting influence to keep in safety the unsuspecting one against whom, at that time, was uplifted the hand of an Apache, in the act of inflicting the death stroke.

Alverstone did not know that his Julia was an heiress of boundless wealth, for the resources of her gold mines were limitless; nor did he even suspicion that she was a scion of one of the most powerful and most ancient houses of England.

He thought no further than that she was an American girl, through whose veins coursed honest, earnest and genteel blood of America—America's best.

At last Cupid was conqueror, and the Muse was weeping.

Thus they sat for some moments. There was no thought now—no action—no nothing, that was tangible—no state that was capable of a clear description; only that something which eludes expression—that strange

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phenomenon—for it is made in heaven, and knows no outward form nor fashion; and when it finds its true affinity upon earth, each knows the other—its own, which is the other's soul, sensitized to vibrate to that other soul sent upon earth by the Maker of the universe to be the only force, in all the wide, wide space capable of sending out the message to which only that other can respond.

Such loves are made in heaven. All marriages resulting from other loves are not known in Paradise.

At last Julia's lips parted, and a gentle gravity rested where the smile had played with the corners of her mouth. Was she sad? No, she was fathoming the depths of true love, upon whose all-satisfying, peaceful current her little boat had now begun its course.

Did she question whether this was true love? Ah, no; she knew that this was true love, and had she been a philosopher she had known that all love bearing the stamp of genuine is as sweet, as gentle, as pure, as insistent, as everlasting as the love borne a child by the mother, who knows herself responsible for that wee bit of humanity.

They sat enrapt, this noble pair, in that blissful state, in which to remain is heaven. Such loves have been, such loves can be, and such loves are the only true loves. All else termed love is only dross—animal passion—the curse of the world.

True love engages only the head and the heart—the other never reaches so high as this.

Hampton Alverstone was a manly man and Julia Pembroke was a womanly woman, and as this is the highest development of man and of woman, they were capable only of the highest love—love that, like their immortal souls, shall take on immortality when all that is mortal of them shall have passed away.



## L'ENVOI.

Early Tuesday morning a fisherman, sitting on the banks of the Seine, saw among the bushes at the side of the Avenue de Neuilly, just where the bridge crosses the river, the body of a woman. He made his way with great difficulty into the tangled overgrowth among which she was lying. After looking at her until he had satisfied himself that she was dead, he telephoned from the nearest point, and a patrol appeared and the body was soon placed upon a slab in the morgue.

A young woman, going through the morgue for the purpose of identifying a wayward sister, whom she feared might be among the unfortunates lying cold in death on every side, came upon this still form. She threw herself in frantic grief upon the body, when, to the horror of those around, two large, black, languorous eyes opened, and a voice said: "Do — not — kill — me — I" —

Then the eyes closed again and the imploration ceased. After questioning by the attendants, and a closer examination by the young searcher, it was known that this was not the lost sister, and the reviving woman was removed to the hospital, where the attending physician and surgeon pronounced her hours numbered, for, though the patient had regained consciousness and could speak connectedly, the knife wounds were very deep and beyond the surgeon's skill and Nature's balm.

When told the result of the examination made upon her wounds, she called for a priest, and then begged the Sisters of Charity to kneel and pray for her. She confessed that she was not a Roman Catholic, but a Catholic

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of the Greek persuasion, and this only that she might be in harmony with the religious views of her late husband—the financier Nitolsk, of Calcutta, India; that she had loved a young American—Hampton Alverstone by name—but he had not loved her in return, for he had loved an American singer, Julia Pembroke, instead; that she had made the acquaintance of this same American singer and had pushed a loving interest upon her, which was all pretense, and only entered into for the purpose of easily accomplishing her destruction; that this she had attempted by means of a sleeping potion, which she had meant to give her at a *réveillon* on Christmas eve, but by an oversight her own child had gotten it, and would have slept himself to death were it not for the efforts of Alla Dekkah, the chemist, who had furnished her the potion; that this same chemist had aided her in a second attempt at destruction of the young singer, by dusting a very deadly Oriental poison into the centers and among the petals of a dozen American Beauty roses, which, afterwards, she herself had taken into the apartment of the young woman, when she was attending Midnight Mass; that this attempt also proving unsuccessful, she determined to rid her world of this Julia Pembroke by means of the Apaches, who, she was certain, would not fail her in this deadly purpose; that she had met them in Montmartre Cemetery, and there had given them half the sum which, in the letter, she had promised if they would take this Julia Pembroke to the Bois and be sure she never left it alive; that on Monday, when she had felt freedom from the galling yoke of jealousy, she had seen her riding with the Trents, and she was happy, with not a shade of pain or sorrow upon her face; that she had not gone to the place of rendezvous, where she was to pay the other half of the money due the Apaches, until they had sent a letter, threatening to steal her little

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son, and, after putting out his eyes, return him to her; that when she had gone to the rendezvous—the bridge over the Seine, near the spot where they had told her she had been found—she urged the chief to make another attempt, but he would not concede, and instead had cursed her and stabbed her and pushed her down the bank, toward the river, saying, hissing, that he never worked for any one who argued the price.

She had been stabbed by one of those parasites of Paris—its beggars by day, its robbers by night—the growth of a world's sin—nurtured within the confines of a great city—the gamin of yesterday, to-day grown, becomes the Apache of to-morrow.

When asked if she would see her child, she objected, adding that it was her dying request he should never know of his mother's wicked life. She gave the address of her home—a number on Rue Caumartin—and wished them carefully, gently, tenderly to tell her child Adino nothing but that his mother had been stabbed by some one on the street, and that she had died in the hospital, where she had been taken.

The priest, seeing an increased pallor come out upon her face, raised his right hand above her head in the act of performing the ceremony for the dying, when Madame Nitolsk, frenzied with terror, raised herself in the bed and seized his arm, shrieking: "Save me! save me! Oh, my God! save me! save me! I am dying! I am so wicked! I see no heaven! Where is it! Hell is around me! Ha, I hear the demons laughing in the red fire—Satan is there too—he stands alone—he is in blue flame—he beckons me—he comes toward me—he stretches out his claws—Ugh! he will catch me—he will draw me down—down there—down to everlasting torment. H—H—H—save me—save me—I am lost—I am

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with God's accursed—the devils of hell clutch me—I am lost—my soul—. Save! Oh God!—Oh God!—Oh!”—

And gasping frightfully, Madame Nitolsk fell back upon the pillows, and the Sisters of Charity—goddesses of Mercy—and the priest—holy man of God—bowed low, as they knelt in a prayer of sincerest sympathy and conscientious devotionality, to await the passing of the soul of Madame Nitolsk from out the body, which she had failed to govern aright.

On a little street which adjoins an avenue at one end and a boulevard at the other, across from two lamp-posts, which cast a regular light on the buildings across the street, is a Protestant church.

New Year's eve, just a little before eight o'clock, one automobile, number 12367, and the landau of the Trents were stopped before this church. One of the church doors was partly opened, and the light from within made a narrow path across the sidewalk outside. It was very cold, and the dull-black horses champed restlessly at their bits. The moon, high up, shone clear and uncircled. The stars blinked on, as if the nipping air picked at their wicks each second.

Every now and then a passer, seeing the light, looked in at the door, and then at the carriage and automobile.

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He understood it was a marriage, but, seeing no one, shrugged his shoulders and went on. It had been snowing, and from the end of the street near the Boulevard Haussmann came the clink of shovels, as they gathered up the snow, and from the end of the street which adjoins the Avenue Champs Elysées sounded the dull echo of a main way of a great city.

It was the marriage of Julia Pembroke to Hampton Alverstone.

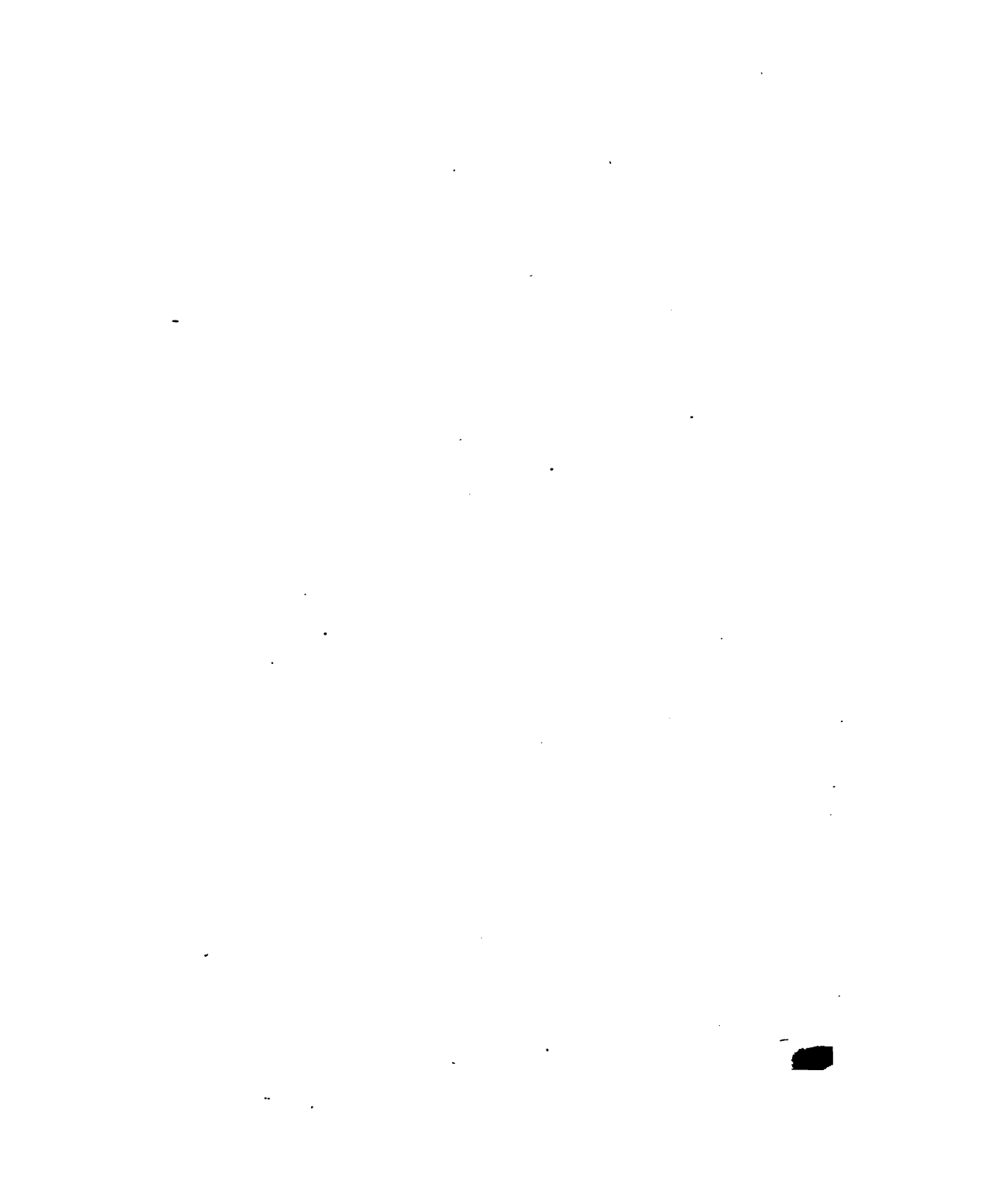












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